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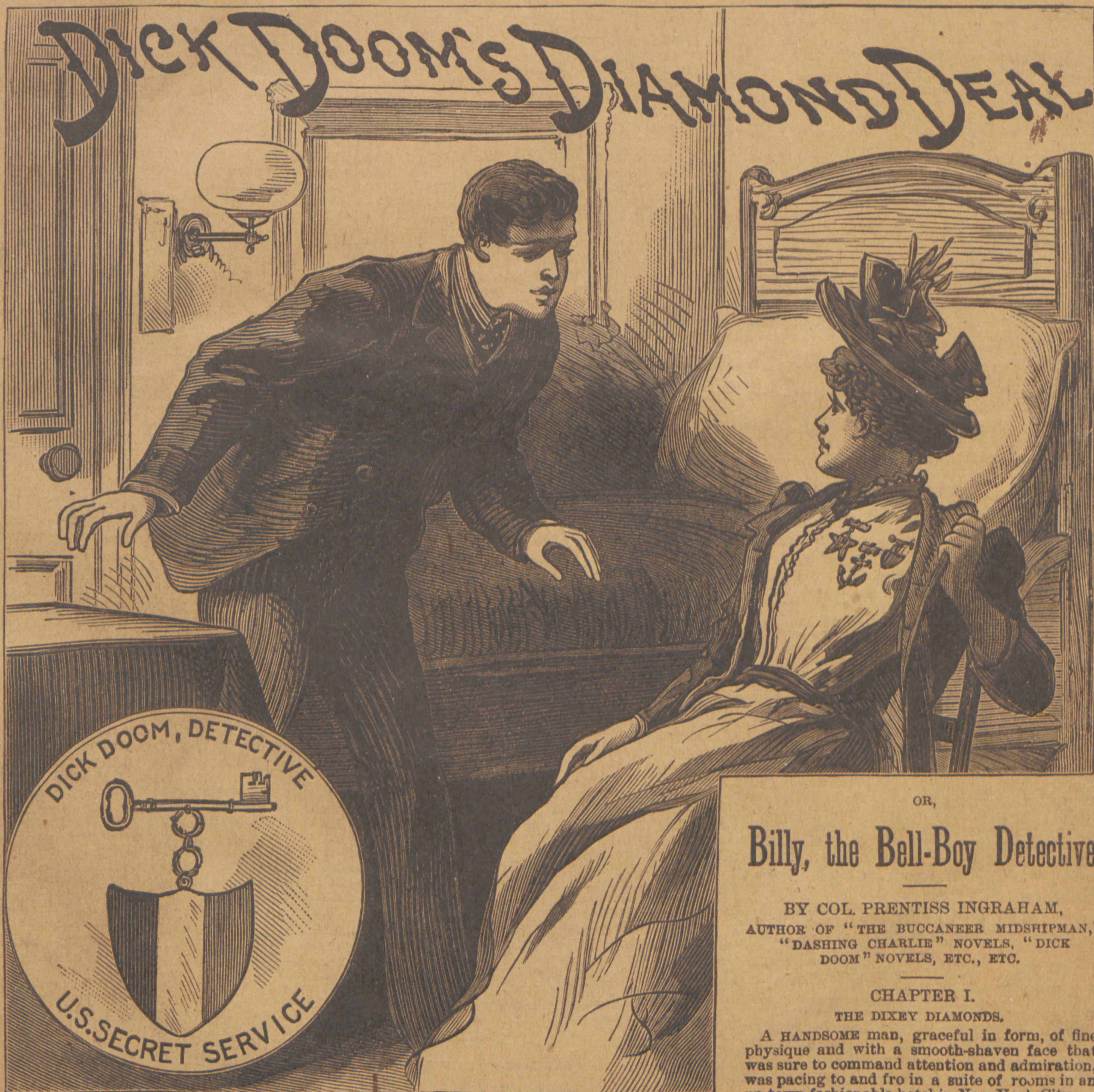
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"YOU, DICK DOOM, THE FERRET OF THE GOLDEN FETTERS?" DEMANDED ADONIS DIXEY
WITH AMAZEMENT.

OR,

Billy, the Bell-Boy Detective.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "THE BUCCANEER MIDSHIPMAN,"
"DASHING CHARLIE" NOVELS, "DICK
DOOM" NOVELS, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE DIXEY DIAMONDS.

A HANDSOME man, graceful in form, of fine physique and with a smooth-shaven face that was sure to command attention and admiration, was pacing to and fro in a suite of rooms in an up-town fashionable hotel in New York City.

His face, generally bright and cheery, now wore a troubled look, and his lips were firmly

set, as though he was greatly distressed at the thoughts that crowded upon him.

About him was the evidence of refinement and elegance upon every side, showing cultivated taste in the occupant of the room, as also an indication that he was not a transient guest, but one who made the hotel his home.

There were paintings of rare value, as well as works of art, *bijouterie*, curios and a fine library.

But none of them seemed then to hold attraction for the gentleman, as he somewhat nervously paced to and fro.

"It is unaccountable to me, the loss of these jewels, and that not the slightest clue can be found by the police and detectives.

"Still, I have hopes that the chief of police may send me word this morning that they have been found, or at least some trace of the thief."

The speaker was one who is known to fame as Henry E. Dixey, the actor, more generally called after one of his plays, as also, on account of his striking appearance, "Dixey, the Adonis."

As he spoke there was a knock at the door and a bell-boy brought in a card.

"Admit him at once," said the actor, and, a moment after, New York City's efficient chief of police entered the rooms.

He was greeted cordially by Dixey, who said, after a moment:

"Well, chief, I suppose you bring me some clue of my lost diamonds?"

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Dixey, that it has been just as impossible for my most skilled detectives to find any clue to the thief, or the diamonds, as it would be for them to get to the moon."

The gloom of disappointment settled upon the face of the actor, and he said in reply:

"Chief, let me tell you a secret which I have kept to myself thus far."

"Well, sir?"

"Those diamonds did not belong to me."

"Ah!"

"No, they were intrusted to my keeping by a friend who is away from this city, at present; hence my greater desire to find them than if they were my own property."

"I understand, sir, and I came not so much to announce the failure to get any clue or trace to the lost jewels as to say that there is one person in whose power to trace those diamonds I hold every confidence."

"Why not put him on the track then, at once?"

"He is not here, for his headquarters, I believe, are in New Orleans."

"Telegraph him then, and put him on at any price."

"I will wire New Orleans's chief of police to send him here. You can then see and talk with him, sir, and see if he will undertake the work."

"Do so, please, without delay, for those diamonds I must recover, the thief I must find."

"But, who is this detective you speak of?"

"I only know, sir, that he is a young man, and at times I have almost believed that he was a woman in disguise, only he possesses wonderful strength and nerve, and has never failed upon any case that he has ever undertaken, no matter how shrouded in mystery it was, or how intricate and blind the trail."

"His name is Dick Doom, though he deals in aliases and disguises without number and can deceive me as readily as he does any one else."

"A marvelous man, surely."

"He is a phenomenon in his way, and when all my men came in this morning, having not the slightest clue to your stolen diamonds, the thought flashed upon me that Dick Doom was the very man for the work, and I decided to call upon you at once and suggest his name."

"I am very glad that you did so, chief, and I shall be most happy to have him undertake the work," replied Henry Dixey, as the chief arose to take his leave.

That evening, as he was in his dressing-room at the theater he received a note from the chief of police which was as follows:

"I wired the New Orleans chief for Doom, and he answers that the young detective is now upon his way to New York."

"He headed him off with a telegram to his train telling him to at once call upon me."

"When he does so I will send him to you to explain all facts of the case."

"Something tells me that this man Dick Doom is the one to trace those jewels," muttered Henry Dixey, as he left his dressing-room to go upon the stage and charm a vast audience with his acting.

CHAPTER II.

THE ACTOR'S VAILED VISITOR.

THE second morning after receiving the chief's note about Dick Doom, Henry Dixey sat in his rooms smoking a cigar after breakfast, and reading the morning papers, in which his own name found most favorable mention.

The story of his lost diamonds had not yet become public, for the actor had made the theft known only to the hotel proprietor and chief of police.

A knock at the door was followed by the entrance of a bell-boy, the same one who had ushered in the chief on his last visit.

He was a youth of seventeen, perhaps, with a slender form clad in a neatly-fitting livery, and a face that no one could behold and not be attracted by it.

Rather pale, intelligent, feminine in features and yet strong in expression, and a certain unreadable look haunting the mouth.

The eyes were large, dark-blue and shaded by lashes a woman would envy for their length and thickness, while the gaze from them was beyond fathoming the meaning of.

The teeth were even and white as milk, the hair, a dark auburn, curled about the neck and temples, and the manner of the boy was gentle, courteous and retiring.

Why such a boy held such a position Dixey, the actor, had found himself wondering over and over again, and as Billy, the Bell-Boy, always seemed the one to seek to serve him he had become really attached to the urchin and was wont to fee him most liberally.

"Well, Billy, what is it now?" asked the actor in a kindly tone, looking up from his paper.

"A lady to see you, sir."

"Ah! this is a surprise."

"Is it one of my company?" he asked, for Billy had been given a "pass" quite frequently, so knew the whole Adonis Company.

"No, sir, I think not; but she is veiled heavily."

"Indeed! a veiled woman, eh?"

"Well, show her up," and the actor at once threw off his dressing-gown, slippers and smoking-cap for more appropriate attire.

Soon after Billy ushered into the sitting-room a slender form clad in black and heavily veiled.

"Be seated, madam, and tell me how I can serve you," said the actor, confident that he had before him some fair society girl who had won applause as an amateur and sought as so many do, to get upon the stage as a professional.

The visitor took the seat, Billy retired and the actor stood awaiting a reply to his courteous inquiry.

It startled him when it came, for she said abruptly:

"You have lately been robbed of a lot of diamonds, sir?"

"I have, madam, though permit me to say that I did not know that it was known to the public."

"It is not, sir."

"Yet you seem to be aware of the fact."

"Yes, as a detective."

"Ah! a female detective."

"Yes."

"One whom the New York chief has had working upon the case, I suppose?"

"Not exactly."

"Have you discovered any clue, may I ask, to the missing jewels?"

"I am here now for that purpose, Mr. Dixey."

"How do you mean?"

"I am here to learn the facts and take my clue from you."

"Ah, yes; but may I ask you to call again, say in a couple of days, for I believe that the affair has, or is about to be placed in the hands of one who I have every reason to believe will find the diamonds."

"Who is it, may I ask?"

"That I am not at liberty to say."

"I can guess."

"You can?"

"Yes."

"Pardon me if I say this is not a guessing match; but, after two days, if you wish to undertake the finding of the diamonds, and the thief, for mind you, I want the thief as much as I do the jewels, come to me and I can tell you about taking the case, for within that time I shall have seen the one I am expecting to go upon the work."

"You have little confidence then in a female detective, I see?"

"No, it is not that, for I have every confidence in a woman finding out just what she sets out to discover, whether love, jealousy,

interest or gold be the motive that prompts her search.

"Yes, I have a high appreciation of what a woman can do, and if the one I seek does not come within the time I name I shall be glad to put you at work to solve the mystery, and the reward I offer, let me say, is a liberal one."

"Yes, you have the reputation of being generous."

"But I must see your face before I set you to work, for though I may be wrong, I have the vanity to believe that I am a good student of human nature, and I would not enter into a compact with any one blindfolded."

"I will reveal my face now, sir."

And as the visitor spoke she raised her veil, the act revealing her face to the astonished gaze of the actor, for he was amazed at its beauty and youth, as he had expected to find a female detective a very different looking personage from the one there before him.

The visitor smiled, for she saw that she had made an impression upon the actor by revealing her face.

CHAPTER III.

SURPRISED.

"Is my face a recommendation, or do you desire better references as to my ability?" asked the visitor, as Henry Dixey seemed more and more impressed with the woman before him.

He answered her promptly:

"Were I engaging an actress, one to play a part in which beauty would be the greatest card, where beauty of face and form are trumps, rather than ability in acting, I would engage you at sight: but when this is *not* to be a theatrical venture depending upon good looks, but, instead, is a very serious matter to me, upon which a fortune depends, as well as a matter of honor, I must ask for references as to your capacity for Secret Service work."

"Suppose I tell you the name of the one you are awaiting the arrival of before depending upon me?"

"Do so if you can."

"He is a young man who has been a remarkably successful ferret."

"Granted."

"He wins every Secret Service game he plays."

"Well, his name?"

"Dick Doom."

"Ah! you know this?" demanded the actor with surprise.

"Yes."

"From the chief?"

"The chief I have not seen."

"Then you merely guess at what you say."

"Guessing often gets at the bottom of facts, Mr. Dixey; but I do not guess; I know."

"Do you know this Dick Doom?"

"I do."

"Have you known him long?"

"Yes, and intimately."

"He has another name, I believe?"

"Yes, Mr. Dixey, he is called the Ferret of the Golden Fetters."

"I have heard so."

"He goes by any name that suits his humor, any disguise that suits his purpose."

"You do seem to know him from what I have heard of the young detective."

"Let me tell you that he it was who sent me to you."

"Dick Doom sent you to me?" and the actor showed his surprise at the assertion of the beautiful visitor.

"Yes."

"Have you any proof of this?"

"You are right to be on your guard Mr. Dixey; it proves your alertness for the tricks and wiles of sharps and adventurers," and a smile irradiated the fine face.

"It is a serious matter to me, so pardon me if I ask you for proof positive that Dick Doom the New Orleans Detective sent you to me?"

"This letter may explain, Mr. Dixey."

He handed him an unsealed letter which the Adonis read aloud.

It was worded as follows:

"MY DEAR DIXEY:—

"This will introduce to you the master detective of whom I spoke, Dick Doom, King of Secret Service Men."

"Trust him implicitly and if he does not get your diamonds and the thief then consider the gems lost forever and the detective a dead man."

"Yours,

"THE CHIEF."

"This introduces Dick Doom, not a woman," said the actor sternly.

"Certainly; and I am Dick Doom, Mr. Dixey."

"You, Dick Doom, the Ferret of the Golden

Fetters?" demanded Adonis Dixey with amazement as he gazed upon the beautiful face of the supposed woman before him.

"Yes, I am Dick Doom the Detective of the Golden Fetters, was the quiet reply.

"I shall certainly need proof of this, for to my eyes you are a young girl, yes, and a very handsome one at that," and the actor spoke earnestly, though he intended to pay no compliment by his words.

The supposed woman unbuttoned the jacket she wore and throwing back the flap revealed half a dozen gold badges, several of which glistened with precious stones.

One was a gold shield, with the three bars of sapphires, pearls and rubies, the red, white and blue, and in diamond letters above the actor read:

"DICK DOOM, DETECTIVE,
UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE OFFICER."

This shield was suspended by miniature handcuffs of gold from a pin representing a key.

There were four other badges, a diamond star, an anchor, the United States Coat of Arms, and a miniature flag, all of them valuable and of rare workmanship, and each bearing the name of Dick Doom.

But the shield, suspended by the little Golden Fetters was all that the actor glanced at, as he seemed satisfied with what he saw, for he said:

"I recall now that the chief told me you were given to many masks and names. You must be Dick Doom in one of your inscrutable disguises."

"I am in one of my not infrequent make-ups."

"It is hard to believe, when I look at you, that you are not a woman; but you said that you had not seen the chief?"

"Nor have I, since my arrival, though I received a letter from him with the one to you inclosed, and he told me to come at once to see you."

"It was my fancy to come as I am."

"Why so?"

"I wished to see you as you are, when you did not know me as Dick Doom."

"I have seen you on the stage, and I wished to behold you as Henry Dixey, not Adonis."

"Well?"

"I wish to hear your whole story now about those diamonds."

Henry Dixey hesitated, and the detective asked:

"Do you wish further proof that I am not deceiving you?"

"You are not a woman?"

"I am Dick Doom the Ferret, Mr. Dixey"

"Do you wish me to take this case?"

"I do," was the actor's emphatic reply.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ACTOR'S STORY.

THE detective took the seat to which the actor motioned him, and said quietly:

"You will not object to my questioning you pointedly as you tell your story?"

"Not in the least."

"I am ready."

"Well, as you see, I live at this hotel, for my stay is indefinite, and upon the door I have a secret lock which shuts out every one except the chambermaid and fireman."

"I see," and the detective had gone to the door and examined the lock.

"I kept my trunk of treasures in yonder large closet, which has a key which I alone carry, and I selected a lock which was one not readily duplicated."

Again the detective examined the lock.

"My treasure-trunk has also an odd lock upon it, and, as you see, there is a space in the bottom that also locks, so that for one to steal these diamonds he would have to possess four different keys, know just where I kept my valuables, and come prepared to rob me of those especial jewels, for let me tell you that my own property he did not disturb."

"Ah! the jewels taken, then, were not your own?"

"No; they were left in my keeping by a friend."

"And these alone were taken?"

"Yes."

"Nothing of your own was missing?"

"Only one thing."

"May I ask what that was?"

"A ruby pin of unique design, for it was an eagle flying, and holding the stone in his claws, while the bird had small diamond eyes."

"Was it of much value?"

"I should say the value was a couple of hundred dollars."

"Had you more valuable jewelry that he could have taken?"

"Yes, fully five thousand dollars' worth of valuables."

"Was the eagle pin with these?"

"Yes, in the velvet box—see, here it is, and the valuables in it, for I did not remove them, though I knew there were duplicate keys to my treasure, keys which I am sure were made for the purpose, for no one could come into this room without having just such as these," and Henry Dixey held out the ring upon which hung the four keys.

"Pardon me, but will you relock your box, trunk, closet and door, shut me out into the hall, and then go into your bedroom and close the door?"

"For what reason?"

"I will show you."

"In just ten minutes open your door and come into your sitting-room."

Interested, Dixey obeyed the request of the strange detective, and after closing the ante-door, went into the room adjoining his parlor.

In just ten minutes he opened the door and started as he saw that a stranger sat in his easy-chair.

It was a woman wearing a Quaker garb, bonnet and all, and with large gold spectacles shielding her eyes.

"Well, madam, is there not some mistake?" he said, wondering if he had not after all locked the outer door.

"No, friend, not if I see in thee the actor, Mr. Dixey."

"I am Dixey, the actor, madam, and I must say I am surprised in finding you here, when I believed this room unoccupied."

"I wish, sir, to see if thee wilt purchase these jewels," and the Quakeress held out a velvet box that was open, displaying jewelry within.

"Great God! they are my own valuables, and—"

"Yes, and I am Dick Doom," was the quiet reply, as removing the bonnet and spectacles, the detective dropped into a chair.

"How on earth did you get in here and secure those jewels?" asked the puzzled actor.

"Very easily, I assure you, with my bunch of burglar keys, and I did so, and changed my costume, or, as you would say, make-up, to show you that no lock is safe from a skilled man of the thieving fraternity, and that you can be readily deceived, even though an actor accustomed to impersonating others."

"You are, as the chief said, a wonder, Mr. Doom."

"Now to your story, which my little by-play broke in upon."

"I'll give you the whole story, Mr. Doom—"

"I am called simply Dick Doom, Mr. Dixey."

"All right, Dick Doom, I'll give you all the facts I can, for I have perfect confidence now in your ability to find those stolen jewels, so ask any questions you will," and lighting a cigar Dixey resumed his seat confronting the detective.

CHAPTER V.

THE STOLEN GEMS.

"THE first question, Mr. Dixey," began the detective in a low tone, "is as to the ownership of the jewels stolen?"

"Well?"

"To whom did they belong?"

"To a Peruvian by the name of Antonio Aquero."

"A friend of yours?"

"Yes, or rather an acquaintance."

"The truth is that at Long Branch two summers ago while in bathing one day when the surf was running very high, I saw a man further out struggling hard to reach the shore."

"I saw that he was in distress and swam to his aid."

"I was just in time, for he was about used up with his hard struggle, but with my help readily reached the shore."

"He spoke English well and thanked me most warmly, while afterward he called upon me at my hotel."

"He was stopping with some friends at a cottage near, and I often met him afterward, and he presented me with the ruby ring that I told you was stolen from my box when the others were taken."

"And the stolen jewels belonged to him?"

"Yes, for he came to me one day, said that he was going to return to Peru for some months and asked me to take care of them for him."

"I suggested his placing them in a safe deposit, but he said he wished to leave them with

me, and so I took the case, and after glancing at them, discovered their value to be enormous."

"How much about?"

"Well, about fifty thousand dollars I should say, from my own valuation, and I know something of the value of gems."

"Of what did the property consist?"

"A necklace of diamonds and bracelets to match, another set, its counterpart, except that the stones were rubies, and a third of emeralds."

"Then there were rings, earrings, pins and several combs, watches, lockets and hair ornaments, all of great value and beauty."

"Was he a dealer?"

"Oh no, he was rich, and my idea was that he had presented these jewels to a lady to whom he had been engaged, and the match being broken off they were returned to him; but remember, this is only a surmise, for when I last saw him he was not near so cheery and light-hearted as when I first knew him, and his intention to return to Peru was evidently suddenly decided upon."

"Did any one know that you had jewels in your keeping?"

"I never told any one that I now recall."

"And all the valuables belonging to you that were taken were of small value?"

"The ruby eagle ring that I spoke of was all."

"And that Antonio Aquero gave to you?"

"Yes."

"When were these jewels stolen, Mr. Dixey?"

"Just two weeks ago."

"You at once reported their loss to the proprietor of the hotel?"

"At once, and went with him to the chief of police, who at once said the robbery must not be made public."

"And no clue has been found?"

"Not a clue to jewels or robber, though the very best detectives in New York have been put upon the case."

"That is strange."

"That is the reason the chief wired to New Orleans to find you, and have you take the case."

"I will take the case, Mr. Dixey."

"Thank you, and your reward shall be most liberal, while draw on me for expenses needed."

"You are kind, but I risk my own money always in a case, and if I accomplish nothing take the loss, and accept no pay."

"This shows confidence in yourself, Mr. Doom."

"Dick Doom, sir."

"Ah, yes; but I wish to find the thief as well as the diamonds, remember."

"I will track both, sir."

"You are generally at home during the morning hours?"

"Yes, up to two P. M."

"At night I am at the theatre, you know."

"I shall look you up, sir, to report to you, or ask any more information that I may need, and let me say to you that when you receive a card with the right upper corner turned down, no matter what name it bears, receive the one who hands it, for I work much in disguises."

"I'll remember it, and your disguises as a female are so wonderful I confess to a great curiosity to seeing you in male attire."

"You may do so before long; but now let me ask you the name of the cottagers whom Mr. Aquero was visiting at Long Branch, where he stopped when in New York, and upon what date he sailed for Peru?"

Henry Dixey wrote the desired information upon a slip of paper and handed it to Dick Doom, who then asked:

"Have you a photograph of the Senor Aquero?"

"I have, yet how is that necessary in this case?"

"I merely wish to see his face, sir."

"Here it is, though what Aquero has to do with my being robbed of his jewels, I cannot understand," said the actor, and he placed a photograph album before Dick Doom and pointed out the Peruvian's likeness.

Dick Doom looked at it attentively for full a minute, jotted down the name and address of the photographer, and said:

"This photograph was taken by W. H. Broach, Photographer, North Platte Nebraska, I see."

"I had not observed that."

"Did you know that Senor Aquero had been West, Mr. Dixey?"

"I did not, for he never spoke of having been, at least to me."

After having asked a few more questions Dick Doom took his leave of the actor who said:

"You are a strange man, Dick Doom, but somehow you impress me with the utmost confidence in your ability to fathom this mystery."

"You have called it by its right name, Mr. Dixey, for it is a mystery, I am assured, as well as a very clever robbery," and shaking hands warmly with the actor Dick Doom took his leave.

Just as the door closed behind Dick Doom he saw a slender form advancing rapidly toward him along the dimly lighted hall.

It was Billy, the Bell-Boy.

CHAPTER VI.

BILLY THE BELL-BOY.

DICK DOOM still wore his costume as a Quakeress, which he had so quickly changed from his black garb, when in Dixey's room, and he naturally supposed that the bell-boy, who had ushered him into the room, would suppose he was another person.

But the detective was surprised when the bell-boy said:

"Please, sir, may I speak to you a minute?"

Dick Doom raised his hands, as though in holy horror and cried in a startled tone.

"What dost thee mean, boy, in addressing me as sir?"

"Thou art impertinent far beyond thy tender years."

"Oh, m'am, please forgive me, but I thought you were a detective in female attire," cried the bell-boy.

"Out upon thee, thou wicked boy," and Dick Doom glided rapidly down the stairs, leaving Billy gazing after him as though dazed.

Upon reaching the street the disguised detective crossed to a cab-stand and got into a *coupe*.

The driver took the blanket from his horse, mounted the box leisurely, wrapped himself up warmly and drove away.

As the *coupe* left the stand, half a block away a hansom cab pulled out from the curb and followed it.

The *coupe* stopped at the door of a retired hotel on the east side of the city and the supposed Quakeress got out, paid the cabman and entered the ladies' entrance.

A moment after the hansom stopped at the main entrance of the hotel, and out sprang Billy the Bell-Boy, an overcoat hiding his uniform.

He paid his driver and entering the hotel asked the clerk if he could go up and see the "Quaker lady" stopping there, adding:

"I don't know her name, but I have a message for her."

"Show this boy to Forty-nine," said the clerk.

"Say, sonny, I'm one of you, in the same biz, you see, and I can find the room, for it's a fee for me, so I'll divvy," and Billy gave the boy half a dollar and went on his way alone.

Dick Doom had not been five minutes in his room when there came a knock at the door.

He stepped to the door, threw it open and there stood Billy, the Bell-Boy.

"Ha! you tracked me here?"

"Yes, sir, for I wished to see you."

"Come in!"

The door closed behind Billy and was locked by the detective, who had, in speaking to the boy, in his amazement at seeing him, for once been caught off his guard and spoken in his natural voice, and not in the womanly tones he could so perfectly assume.

"You will persist in saying *sir* to me."

"Yes, sir, because you are a man."

"Do I look it?"

"No, sir, your disguise is perfect, yet you are not a woman."

"Well, granted, what then?" and Dick Doom's eyes were riveted upon the face of the boy, and he seemed to find his face one worth studying.

"You are a detective?"

"Why do you think so?"

"Well, sir, I have shown the chief of police, and several men whom I know are detectives, to Mr. Dixey's rooms of late, and I met you when you called, and then you were a pretty young lady in black."

"Well?"

"I was off duty then, so I just waited about the hall and I saw you come out and go in again immediately."

"Yes."

"I still waited, walking by the door several times, and I heard the voices within of two men."

"Eavesdropping, eh?"

"Not intentionally, sir; but I had a motive for what I did."

"Go on."

"I knew that only yourself and Mr. Dixey were in that room, and I waited."

"You have patience."

"It is a virtue, sir, I have had reason to cultivate."

"You talk well for a boy of your years and occupation."

"I have seen better days, sir, than serving as a bell-boy in a hotel."

"So I believe."

"But to your story."

"I was surprised when you came out in a different garb from the one you wore in, but it convinced me that I was right in my belief that you were a detective and so I spoke to you."

"And then followed me here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"I was determined to speak to you."

"About what?"

"The Dixey diamond robbery."

"Ah! you know that there was a robbery?"

"Yes, sir."

"How do you know of it?"

"I was doing some work in the office, sir, when Mr. Dixey came in and told the proprietor of his loss."

"What do you know of this robbery?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Why did you not tell Mr. Dixey?"

"I did not wish any one, not even Mr. Dixey, to know that I was aware of the robbery."

"Yet you come to me."

"I was certain that you were a detective, sir, and I came to see if you would let me help you try and find the diamonds and the thief."

"Ah! you wish to play detective?"

"Not *play* detective, sir, but be one in reality."

"Can you be trusted?"

"I can, sir."

"What do you wish to do?"

"I wish to still remain in the hotel as bell-boy, sir, yet serve you as a ferret, for I believe I can help you."

"Well, my boy, I have half a mind to try you."

"Oh, sir, please do."

"Have you told any one that you know this secret?"

"Not a soul, sir."

"How long have you been at the hotel?"

"Three months, sir."

"What is your name?"

"Billy, sir."

"Your other name?"

"Just, Billy, sir, the bell-boy."

"Well, let me write a note that is important, and I will have a talk with you."

The note was written and sent by a messenger, and then Dick Doom turned to the bell-boy and said:

"Well, Billy, the manner in which you discovered my disguise, and tracked me here proves that you will make a good detective, so I will take you into my service, and you may begin work in the hotel, when you again go on duty there as bell-boy."

An hour after, when Billy the Bell-Boy left the room of Dick Doom he did not see that he was followed by a man who had, a few moments before, taken up a position in the hallway which commanded a view of the detective's door.

CHAPTER VII.

A BELL-BOY SPORT.

THE note which Dick Doom had written was addressed to Police Headquarters and asked for a detective to be sent at once to his hotel to dog the steps of a boy who would leave his room.

After the departure of the bell-boy, Dick Doom proceeded to disrobe himself of his feminine attire and resume his masculine garb.

He packed the dresses away in one of his three large trunks, and leaving the room, locked his door, departing from the hotel by the ladies' entrance.

An hour after an order came for the baggage of Miss Prue, the Quakeress, and inclosed money to settle her bill.

The bearer took the luggage to another hotel, where it was sent to a suite of very pleasant rooms which had been engaged by "D. Richards, New Orleans," for so the name and address appeared upon the register.

It is useless to say that "D. Richards" was none other than Dick Doom, and he had hardly gotten comfortably settled in his new quarters when, bundled up in heavy coat and sealskin cap, he sallied forth for a walk.

His way led to Police Headquarters, and asking for the chief, he was told that he was not in the city, having gone over to Philadelphia the day before, but was expected back that night.

"You received a note asking that a detective be placed on watch at a room in an up-town hotel to track a boy when he left there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was it done?"

"Yes, sir; the man was sent immediately, but has not yet returned."

"Send him to call on this person when he returns," and he handed a card, upon which was written the name of D. Richards and the hotel where he was stopping.

"He will be sent there, sir; but who shall I tell the chief it was who called?"

"Give him this letter, for that will explain," and Dick Doom left Police Headquarters, walked up Broadway leisurely, got his dinner in a fashionable restaurant and returned to his hotel.

He found there a man waiting to see "Mr. Richards," and took him with him to his room.

"Your name, please?"

"Gordon, sir."

"Your occupation?"

"Detective."

"You have a badge?"

It was promptly shown.

"Sit down, Mr. Gordon, and tell me what you have been doing."

The detective obeyed, and said:

"I tracked a boy in livery from a room in an up-town hotel, sir."

"Well?"

"He got to the nearest hack-stand, got a *coupe*, and took a drive to Central Park."

"Ah! quite an extravagance for a bell-boy?"

"Yes, sir, for he paid six dollars for his cab."

"Well?"

"He drove to a French restaurant and had a *table d'hote* dinner—"

"With wine?"

"No, sir, he drank nothing."

"And then?"

"He went to a small but pleasant flat-house in Twenty-second street—here is the address, sir—and his flat is on the top floor, left side of the hall going up."

"He lives there?"

"He remained there, sir, until seven o'clock, when he came out and returned to the hotel where he works, going on duty at eight, it being his night on duty."

"Who else lives in the flat?"

"I do not know, sir, and the janitor could only tell me that the rent was paid in advance, and no cooking was done in the flat, and he knew of the occupants, in fact, had never seen any one else than the boy go and come from there."

"And he is on duty for the night at the hotel?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you, Mr. Gordon, you have done well."

"Here is your pay," and the sum handed Detective Gordon seemed to please him, while Dick Doom added:

"I shall doubtless need your services again."

When Gordon had left the room Dick Doom set to work to make another wardrobe.

This consisted of a suit of clothes of English cut, and checked cloth, a blonde wig and side whiskers, Derby hat, gold eye-glasses, yellow gloves and walking-stick and umbrella.

His shoes and gaiters even were of English make, and leaving the hotel he took a cab and drove to an Express Office.

Here he got a trunk and was soon after put down at the hotel where Henry Dixey lived.

He seemed not particular in the selection of a room, and at last was satisfied, having registered as

"MACKENT MACKINTOSH,

Edinburgh."

The room he secured was but a few doors from that of Henry Dixey, and Bill, the Bell-Boy who showed him up, was not clever enough to penetrate his disguise.

To his surprise Billy was given a guinea for his services, and at once supposed the Britisher was a millionaire lord traveling *incog*.

But the pretended Scotchman remained but a few minutes in his room, and then sallied out for a walk up Broadway.

He stopped in at the theater where Dixey was playing, and found "standing room only," but was told that one box had remained unsold.

This he took, and was shown to it alone, his odd appearance attracting attention, which he was apparently oblivious of.

He watched Dixey's acting with deepest interest, and at the close of the performance was leaving his box, when he caught sight, through the wings, of the chief of police awaiting the coming of the actor when the curtain should fall.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHIEF RETURNS.

WHEN Henry Dixey made his good-night bow, amid a thunder of applause from his admirers, he turned from the stage to find the chief of police awaiting him.

The two were friends, independent of the mysterious secret they were trying to solve, and the actor, greeting the chief cordially, said:

"Go to the hotel to have supper with me."

"I will, for I am just back from Philadelphia, where I have been too busy even to eat."

"I drove by my quarters, and having a letter telling me my man was in town, came up to see you."

"Yes, I have seen her."

"Her?"

"Well, he came in petticoats to see me."

"One of his clever disguises, but we will talk it over later."

The two soon after left the theater together, had supper in Dixey's rooms, and lighting their cigars settled back before a glowing fire for a talk.

"Well, Dixey, what do you think of Dick Doom?"

"I like her immensely."

"You surely do not believe him to be a woman?"

"I'll tell you."

"I had a call from a woman in black, and veiled."

"When the veil was removed I beheld what I would call a dandy young widow, glad that her loved one had gone to join the angels, feeling that he would be better off far removed from this sinful world."

"Well, chief, she at last sprung her identity upon me, and I discovered that it was Dick Doom."

"He had the official stamp, so I talked it over with him, and gave him my ideas that the one who robbed me had taken a long time to get duplicate keys and all that."

"Then he asked me to shut him out of the door, and remain in my bedroom for just ten minutes."

"Why?"

"Just to show me how I could be taken in."

"Well?"

"I did so, and when the ten minutes were up I opened my bedroom door and was startled at beholding a Quakeress seated in my easy-chair."

"It was that clever dog, Doom."

"It was, and what a scientific burglar and confidence man he would make, for he had opened my outer door, then my closet, next my trunk, then the box and handed me over my own jewels."

"I told you that he was a marvel."

"He is more, for in ten minutes he had pulled off his outer garb, put on a Quakeress hat, gloves and kerchief, gotten into my treasure-box and was serenely awaiting me."

"I would then have sworn that he was a woman, when his soft voice suddenly changed and he spoke in a deep, rich manly voice."

"He is a ventriloquist too, you know."

"No, I didn't know, chief."

"But I would not be surprised at anything he does, for he beats me at my own game of impersonation."

"And he undertook your case?"

"Yes, after asking me a hundred questions foreign to the subject."

"Don't you believe it, for he had a purpose in every question asked you."

"Well, I have confidence in him, the more so that he pays all his expenses, and asks nothing if he fails."

"Yes, that is his way; but if he undertakes it you may be sure that he saw success in it."

"I hope so, for though I would make good every dollar of the value of those stolen jewels to my friend, it would be a heavy blow upon me, and I am most anxious to show up the thief."

"Dick Doom will do it if any man can."

"I have the same faith."

"He called on me and left a note in which he said you would tell me what was decided upon."

"I find that he also sent to Headquarters, got a detective and had some one shadowed, but who I cannot find out, as Gordon, the man who served him, was not on duty to-night."

"He will act promptly, I am sure; but did you see that Scotchman in the box to-night?"

"Yes, I watched him from the wings, and he enjoyed your playing immensely, for he seemed to have no eyes for any one else."

"If he comes to-morrow night, I'll spring his make-up on the audience, for I ordered a suit, whiskers and all, to-night, to impersonate him, as I saw that half the house were on to him."

"Do it, and you'll make a great hit."

"Now I must be going."

"I'll see you down," and Dixey accompanied the chief from the room.

As they went toward the elevator, they were surprised to see Mr. Mackent Mackintosh come out of his room and walk along near them.

He entered the elevator with them, and yet did not appear to recognize Dixey in his ordinary dress.

Seeing this the chief said:

"Dixey, you are a drawing card in this city, and I never tire of going to your theater."

The supposed Scotchman started at this, and turning, said with a strong Scotch dialect:

"Pardon me, sir, but are you the great actor, Henry Dixey?"

"I am Dixey the actor, sir," was the modest reply.

"I saw your performance to-night, sir, and I shall have a box to-morrow night—in fact again and again, for I am charmed."

Dixey thanked the speaker for his complimentary opinion of him, and as he parted with the chief, said:

"Come to-morrow night and see me impersonate my Scotch admirer."

"I'll be there," was the ready reply.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHIEF MAKES A VISIT.

WHEN Mr. Mackent Mackintosh parted at the elevator from Henry Dixey and the chief, he called a cab and drove to the number given him by Gordon as the house of Billy the Bell-Boy.

He left the cab, told the driver to wait around the corner for him, and going up the steps, after a few attempts with a bunch of keys, opened the door and entered.

A dim light burned in the halls, and he made his way to the top floor, again put his keys to use, and opened a door upon the left.

He found himself in a comfortably-furnished parlor, and striking a light, cautiously began to explore the premises.

He went next into a bedroom, also well furnished, and this led into a small dining-room and kitchen.

Not a soul was in the house, and all was neat and in perfect order. There were books in the parlor, English French and Spanish, an easel and some painting materials with several well executed specimens of the artist's skill, a portfolio of drawings, a guitar and other evidences that the occupant possessed a refined taste.

A cheerful coal fire burned in the parlor grate, and there were indications on all sides that the dweller in the rooms took his comfort, and there was nothing to show that there was more than one occupant. But, with his skeleton keys Dick Doom, in his character of Mackent Mackintosh, opened a closet that had a spring lock upon it.

What he found there caused him to give a low whistle of evident amazement.

He looked carefully over the things, disturbing nothing to show that they had been handled, and then relocked the door.

Going to a table he took up a large and handsome photograph album, and seating himself before the fire he leisurely began to look it over.

Now and then he made notes of the names of photographers, and upon several of the pictures he saw there he devoted considerable attention, as though striving to impress the faces upon his memory.

At last he arose and turning down the gas, as he had found it, left the flat, made his way out of the house and around to where his cabman awaited him.

He gave the order to drive to the hotel, where he had also made his quarters, as D. Richards, and was soon in bed and sleeping soundly, apparently contented with his work for the day.

It was nine o'clock when he arose and went down to breakfast, and soon after there was a card brought to him at which he said:

"Show the gentleman up."

A few minutes after he stepped forward and greeted the chief of police as he entered the room.

"My dear Doom I am glad to welcome you again to New York," said the chief cordially.

"Thank you, sir, and I was going to call upon you at eleven, but am glad you called, for, as you know, I do not care to be seen too often about Headquarters, or to go there unless in disguise."

"Yes, I know, and it is the best, while every time you come you deceive me as to who you are, as I know to the tune of half a dozen bets that I have lost to you, that I would know you."

"But you have seen Dixey?"

"Yes, sir."

"And taken his case?"

"I have, sir."

"Good! that means success."

"I am not so sure of that, chief."

"Ah! you say this who have never lost a case?"

"True, I am given to success, I admit, but then this case has far more in it than is apparent upon the surface."

"So it appears to me and I said as much to Dixey, who is a splendid fellow, and one I hope we can serve successfully."

"I called upon him last night."

"Yes, at the theater and went to supper with him at his hotel."

"Ah! you know this?"

"Oh, yes, having engaged in the case I must keep a watch on Mr. Dixey's intimate friends," assured Dick Doom with a smile.

"And began by watching the chief of police," said the chief, laughing.

"I must start at the fountain head."

"But seriously, chief, this is a very remarkable case, and to get down to bed-rock requires a great deal of skill, acting and cunning."

"I told Dixey if you undertook it you would win."

"I have undertaken it with a determination to fathom the secret and bring all parties to punishment, for, mark my words, there are more in this plot, for plot it is, than one thief."

"You surprise me, Dick."

"I will surprise you still more when I gather up the threads of this mystery."

"You know more than you admit?"

"I know absolutely nothing—yet," was the response, but there was a world of meaning in the way that Dick Doom said yet.

CHAPTER X.

A MAN OF MYSTERY.

"WELL, Dick Doom," resumed the chief;

"The case is in your hands, Dixey is your client, so do for him all in your power, for he is deserving of it."

"Yes, he certainly is, and should be protected from what crosses my mind as a plot, as I see it now."

"You know best: but have you told him of your suspicions?"

"Oh! no, nor do I intend to do so until I know just how matters stand."

"You have seen him act?"

"Yes."

"Well, come to-night and see him, for I am to have a box, and I am anxious to see him take off a guy who was there last night, occupying a box all alone."

"Who was he?"

"A Scotchman, whom we afterward met in the elevator, and hearing me call Dixey's name spoke to him and said he intended to come to-night."

"Struck with his looks and make-up, Dixey intends to impersonate him to-night and the audience will recognize him at once and the fun will begin."

"I am sorry I cannot be there, for I have an engagement, chief, but I have no doubt the impersonation will be perfect, knowing Mr. Dixey's clever character sketching as I do."

"Now what can you tell me about this diamond robbery?"

"Very little."

"You put your best men upon it?"

"My very best."

"Without results?"

"With no result."

"You have their reports?"

"Yes, all of them."

"I should like to see them."

"Come any time and look them over."

"You have your own ideas of the thief?"

"Well, I have formed scores of them, yet not one seems now tangible in the light of the failures made by my men to find any clue whatever."

"You believe that the diamonds were stolen?"

"Beyond all doubt."

"Have you suspected any one in the hotel?"

"Yes, and had shadowed all the servants until convinced that the thief was an outsider."

"What of Mr. Dixey's friends?"

"I know not one who could be suspected; that is, one who is intimate enough with him to gain access to his rooms."

"Have you thought of a woman in the case?"

"Ah! it would be a strange case indeed that did not have a woman in it."

"That is true, any case without a woman in it is playing Hamlet without a ghost."

"You have reason to suspect that there is a woman mixed up in this?"

"I always look first for the woman, when any case is put in my hands."

"You have some suspicion of one in particular?"

"Well, no, not as the thief."

"Do you need aid from any of my men?"

"I have an able assistant, thank you, in a person I ran upon, but should I need any aid from you I will at once ask it."

"Do so."

"Now let me ask if your suspicions have fallen upon any of the hotel guests?"

"Well, no, not after I had looked over the list of hotel patrons."

"Remember, chief, no one is above suspecting under some circumstances."

"Then your suspicions lie upon some one guest?"

"No, I only wish to know all about them."

"I can get you the information in a few hours."

"Thank you, no, for I have an assistant boarding in the hotel."

"Good! you are playing this game to win, I see, Dick Doom," said the chief with enthusiasm.

"I play no game to lose, chief," was the calm reply of the young detective, who was now dressed in his ordinary garb of every-day life.

"Do you need any money, Dick?"

"Not a dollar."

"I know that you are always well supplied, but then you are spending much, or will, upon this venture."

"If successful the State will pay for it, and if not I can afford the loss."

"The latter contingency is hardly fair to you."

"I accept it, though."

"Let me congratulate you upon your recent very remarkable ferret work in the West, in Washington City and the case you ran to earth in this city."*

"They were cases that interested me greatly, as in fact all of my cases do."

"Well, I only wish I could settle you here in New York, for I would make you Chief of the Ferrets."

"Thank you, chief, but I am a creature of circumstances, a ferret by nature as well as by profession, and I have a duty to perform which lies at the bottom of all of my other Secret Service work—in truth, is the basis which prompted me to become a detective."

"I must go and come at will, accept or refuse what I please, and so go on following my destiny as a human hound to run down my fellow-men, yes, and women," and Dick Doom spoke in a low, earnest tone, which convinced the chief that he had a history of his own, perhaps more mysterious than any he attempted to solve for others—that he was indeed a man of mystery.

CHAPTER XI.

DIXEY'S IMPERSONATION.

TRUE to his promise, Mackent Mackintosh was in his box at the theater on the following night.

But he was not alone, for there sat near him a youth, neatly dressed, and whose handsome face was in striking contrast to the pretended Scotchman, with the long red side-whiskers, glasses and lugubrious expression, while he seemed conscious only of his own existence.

He had a high standing collar, a red necktie, the same loud-looking checked suit and yellow gloves, while his wig was as shaggy as the wool of a mountain goat.

The youth by his side, though he had discarded his livery, was readily recognized as Billy the Bell-Boy.

He had answered a call that afternoon to the room of the disguised detective, and had been given an invitation to the theater that evening.

Billy had declined the invitation on account of having just gone on duty, but the detective said he would get him excused and have him go, and he did so.

Billy went home to change his livery for some suitable attire, and met the pretended Scotchman at the theater door.

To his great surprise Billy found that they were to have a box, and he glanced with some trepidation of manner over the crowded theater.

The Scotchman took a seat where all could see him, and placed the youth where he was able to have a better view of the stage, and in silence the two awaited the raising of the curtain until presently there entered the opposite box a gentleman and several ladies.

"That is the chief of police, sir," whispered

Billy as he recognized the gentleman in the other box.

The detective glanced over at him, as though the chief of police had neither terrors or charms for him, and soon after the curtain went up and every eye that had been enjoying the striking appearance of the Scotchman, who sat all unconscious that he was being guyed, was now riveted upon the stage.

Dixey's entrance was greeted with a tremendous round of applause, in which the detective and Billy joined and the play went on with vim and fascination for all.

When the curtain fell upon the first act, the chief of police left his box and went back upon the stage to Dixey's dressing-room.

"You saw your Scotch friend in the box, Dixey?"

"Ah, yes, and I hope he'll recognize himself upon the stage when I impersonate him," replied the actor with a laugh.

"He is not alone to-night."

"No, and who do you suppose it is with him?"

"I do not know, though I have seen the youth somewhere before, I am sure."

"It is Billy."

"What Billy?"

"The bell-boy who has shown you to my rooms a dozen times, chief."

"By Jupiter, but you are right."

"He brought the bell-boy with him for company then?"

"Yes," and soon after the chief returned to his box and once more the curtain rose.

When at last the scene came in which Henry Dixey did his wonderful character impersonations, the chief riveted his eyes upon him and moved a trifle nervous.

Would the actor make the hit he hoped to do?

Would the audience see who it was that was being satirized?

Every eye in the theater had seen the disguised detective in his most conspicuous seat, and his appearance had been commented upon by many, while the one they guyed seemed serenely unconscious that he was attracting any attention whatever.

Billy the Bell-Boy had observed the looks cast upon him, heard subdued laughter and comments and had become very uneasy, his face flushing with indignation and mortification.

Suddenly, after a vigorous *encore*, Dixey reappeared.

The effect was electrical, the perfection of his make-up startling.

Every eye turned from the actor to the box, to see if the Scotchman was still there, and that it was not he who was upon the stage.

But there he sat his eyes riveted upon the actor as though all unconscious of the clever counterfeit, as though he could not apply to himself the words of the old Scotch lines.

"Oh wad some power the giftie gie us
To see ourselves as ithers see us."

Billy the Bell-Boy recognized the counterfeit of his generous patron at a glance and his face became crimson while a look of reproach fell upon the clever actor.

The house burst forth in a perfect roar, and when Dixey sung his inimitable song, "It is English, you know," the walls fairly shook with applause.

The chief was convulsed with laughter, as were others, while as serene as a May morn, except that he applauded the actor, as though unconscious of who he was satirizing, he sat to the end, and seemed wholly to enjoy his evening at the theater.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BELL-BOY SHADOWED.

WHEN Henry Dixey left the theater, he hastened away from his many friends, who sought to congratulate him upon his last great hit in impersonation, and made his way rapidly to his hotel.

He had an engagement with the chief, and while awaiting the latter's coming hastily wrote upon a card as follows:

"Henry E. Dixey's compliments to Mr. Mackent Mackintosh and would be glad to have him join him in his rooms at supper this evening."

This card was sent by a bell-boy to the room of Mr. Mackintosh, and while awaiting a response the chief arrived.

"Dixey you are great!"

"I never saw a make-up more perfect, your dialect was Scotch itself, and in fact you made a great hit."

"Thank you, chief, a hit the original did not catch on to."

"So it appeared."

"I fear I may have hit him too bard, for often my impersonations offend, so I have just sent him a note asking him to come and have supper with me this evening."

"And his answer?"

"I have not received it; but I am anxious to beg his pardon for the liberty I took, and to tell him that it is one of my weaknesses to satirize."

"Why did he take the bell-boy with him for a companion?"

"He is unacquainted here doubtless, felt lonely, and so invited the boy for company, as well as perhaps to give the lad a pleasant evening."

"By the way, Dixey, that is a striking-looking young fellow, that bell-boy."

"He is, indeed, chief, and I am certain has been raised in wealth and refinement."

"Can you learn nothing of him?"

"Nothing, for he is at once silent when I question him regarding himself."

"Come in!"

The door opened and the boy who had taken the card to the Scotchman returned to say that he was not in his room and could not be found about the hotel, so he had left the note in his box.

"That was right, for he will see that my intention was good."

"Now, Brickdust, what is Bell-Boy Billy's real name?" asked the actor of the boy, who, on account of his fiery red hair was known as Brickdust.

"I dunno."

"You have never heard of it?"

"No, sir."

"He's a clever fellow, isn't he?"

"Waal, sir, he's clever enough, and his being good to us boys is all as saves him from a lick-in', for he's too stuck-up for our kind."

"He is not very strong, perhaps, and rough, but I know that he treats you all well."

"Yes, sir, he does, for he gives us tickets to ther shows, treats us to sody-water and when we is broke always has a quarter or half to lend us."

"Where does he live?"

"None o' us knows, sir; but somehow folks fees him big for he makes lots o' money."

"Well, here is a fee for you," and the actor handed a bill to the delighted boy who skipped out to make his good fortune known to his comrades on the night watch with him.

"There is some mystery about that boy, chief," said Dixey.

"It would seem so, for he certainly is a little gentleman and as handsome as a picture," was the answer.

The two friends then had supper together, again talking over the stolen jewels, and discussed Dick Doom and his work.

The chief spoke of his visit to the detective that morning, and remarked that he would drop in and see him again in the morning.

In the meanwhile Dick Doom, in his disguise, had left the theater with Billy the Bell-Boy, to whom he said:

"I am going to drive down-town, lad, so get in with me and I'll drop you down at your home."

"No, thank you, sir, for I can walk," quickly answered the lad.

"No, I will drive you home."

"No, sir, I have not far to go, and I will not trouble you."

"You have been very kind to me, sir, and I thank you."

"Good-night, Mr. Mackintosh," and Billy quickly disappeared in the crowd.

"He does not wish me to know where he lives."

"Well, I'll see if he goes straight home."

So saying the disguised detective crossed to a cab stand, and springing into a *coupe* told the driver to halt at a certain number and drive there with all dispatch.

It was a large flat house nearly opposite to where Billy lived.

Seated in the cab Dick Doom watched from his window and soon after Billy came along, entered his door, and five minutes passed before a light was visible in the windows of the little parlor.

"I must know more of that strange boy," muttered Dick Doom.

"In some way he is connected with the theft of those diamonds."

"Now I will drive to my hotel where I am known as Mr. Richards," and apparently enjoying the life he was leading of a man of mystery himself, Dick Doom drove to the hotel which he had made his especial headquarters while in the city.

* See "Dick Doom" Series of HALF-DIME LIBRARY No's. 772, 777, 784, 788, 793, 798, 803 and 808.

CHAPTER XIII.

REVEALED.

THE chief called the next morning upon Dick Doom, asking for him at the hotel office as "Mr. Richards," and found him busy writing letters.

"Well, Dick, how are you this morning?"

"All right, chief, and you?"

"Never better, for I had a laugh last night at Dixey's performance that drove away all the worry from my mind."

"I have seen Adonis a dozen times and hope to see it as many more, for the theater is a great place for the students of human nature to go to school."

"But last night there was a scene not down on the bills."

"What was it, sir?"

"I asked you to go, you know?"

"Yes, sir, and I was sorry that a previous engagement prevented my accompanying you."

"Well, I spoke to you of a Scotchman, a good enough fellow doubtless, but a perfect guy, for odd people never seem to know that the world is laughing at them."

"He was a guy then?"

"A perfect guy, and he attracted the attention of the audience the moment he entered his box, while, who do you think was with him?"

"Who, chief?"

"Billy the bell-boy at the hotel where Dixey stops."

"His invited guest?"

"Yes, and a bright, handsome lad he is too, and company for any one."

"He seemed mortified at what occurred, for the sake of his companion, who really did not seem to see his take-off in Dixey's impersonation."

"Was it a hit?"

"The best I ever saw, the dialect, clothes, manner and all being perfect."

"Dixey feared he might have hit him too hard so wrote and asked him to supper with him, but he could not be found, though he rooms near the actor."

"Perhaps he drove him to suicide."

"Not he, for he did not know that he was being counterfeited."

"But now what news?"

"Well, chief, I have two detectives in the hotel where Mr. Dixey stops."

"But why two?"

"One cannot be always on duty you know, and one does not suspect that he is watched."

"Two of my men, I suppose?"

"I wish you had spoken to me, for I could have suggested the best to use."

"No, sir, they are my own men."

"Then you have men here, Dick?"

"One of these men is myself, chief."

"Ah! you have a room there, also?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the other?"

"Is Billy the Bell-Boy."

"A boy?"

"Oh, yes."

"Can you trust him?"

"I am absolutely certain that I can."

"But you cannot be much there."

"More than you think, chief."

"But will you keep a secret?"

"Certainly."

"Mr. Dixey is not to know, even."

"I will not speak of it to a soul."

"I have another detective at the same hotel."

"What, a third?"

"A man in whom I have as much confidence as myself."

"Indeed; then he must be a good one."

"It is Mr. Mackent Mackintosh."

"What?"

"I mean it."

"That Scotchman?"

"Yes, sir."

"The man Dixey guded so unmercifully last night?"

"The same."

"Why, he does not appear to have any more sense than will get him comfortably through life."

"He has as much as I have."

"That is high praise for him, surely."

"Well, what have you against him, chief?"

"Not a thing, other than his *outré* appearance."

"Appearances are deceitful."

"Granted, as you have especially demonstrated to me in your many disguises."

"The Scotchman is another, chief."

"I grant it, if what you say of him is so."

"You know me, chief?"

"Oh, yes, I know you, yet you are ever a mystery to me, I will admit."

"Well, in the Scotchman you see your humble servant in disguise."

The chief looked amazed, but said:

"Come, come, Dick, this is pushing my belief in your powers too far."

Dick Doom arose, and going to one of his trunks, unlocked it.

"Is this like the suit he wore—the wig, glasses and whiskers, and—"

"Say no more, for you are the Scotchman, I see."

"But this would break poor Dixey's heart."

"Oh, no, for what I appeared, he copied, and he did it well."

"But your motive, Dick?"

"Well, I'll answer you in your own words awhile since, that the theater is a good place for the student of human nature to prosecute his studies."

"There were those there whom you suspected?"

"Well, there were those there whom I wished to have my eyes upon, and I took the bell-boy along to watch him under the influence of the play and see if he had anything on his mind that worried him, for that was the place to study him."

"I watched Dixey and his people, and formed my own opinions from all that I saw."

"The bell-boy does not know you as—"

"As the Scotchman only, but I wished you to know me, chief, for I will need your aid in the work before me," was the earnest reply, and the chief of police took his leave more than ever impressed with the Ferret of the Golden Fetters.

CHAPTER XIV.

BILLY AND THE FERRET.

THE papers gave Henry Dixey a very fine criticism upon his impromptu work in characterizing the supposed Scotchman who had but twice occupied a box in his theater, and this made the actor more anxious to see him, for he had not wished to offend him.

He tried in vain to find him during the day, and his mail, the clerk told him, remained in his box uncalled for.

Dixey was therefore anxious as to whether the Scotchman would turn up at night in the box he had twice before occupied.

He therefore cast a quick glance at the box when he made his entrance.

The Scotchman was there.

"He is not offended at least," mused the actor, and yet he at once made up his mind that he would not again impersonate his seemingly great admirer.

As soon as the curtain went down he sent an usher, with his card, asking the Scotchman to come back upon the stage to his dressing-room.

The invitation was promptly accepted and in his broad dialect the supposed Scot thanked the actor for his invitation of the night before, and added that he had been absent from the hotel all day, or should have replied to it.

"Now, my friend," he continued: "I see by the papers that you impersonated me last night, and all recognized me."

"It was good, very good, for I recognized my counterfeit at once, and I hope you will repeat it to-night, as I may not have another opportunity to see you."

"I will do so upon one condition, Mr. Mackintosh, for when I thought over my characterization of you, I felt that I had done wrong."

"Not in the least, my dear fellow."

"But the condition?"

"That you have supper with me after the performance."

"It is a bargain," was the answer, and the detective returned to his box, and once more Dixey convulsed the audience with his "take off" of the supposed Scot, the latter appearing again unconscious that he was the victim of the actor.

Shortly before midnight the detective knocked at Dixey's door in the hotel and received a cordial welcome, the two chatting together like old friends.

But an hour after the actor was compelled to admit that he knew nothing whatever about the Scot, and there seemed to be an air of mystery about him which he could not understand.

Leaving the actor's room the detective went to his hotel and had just changed his toilet when a knock came at his door.

It was a bell-boy, and he was accompanied by none other than Billy.

Dick Doom greeted the bell-boy pleasantly and said:

"So you got my note, Billy?"

"Yes, sir, and when I came off duty at twelve o'clock, I went home, changed my clothes and came to see you here."

"Do you recognize me now as the lady in

black, or the Quakeress, you showed up to Mr. Dixey's parlor?"

"You are the same, sir, though I would not recognize you."

"Well, Billy, what have you discovered?"

"Not much, sir, excepting this is a list of the visitors Mr. Dixey has had," and he handed the detective a slip of paper, upon which a number of names were written.

Dick Doom glanced over them and said:

"So a Scotchman took supper with him to-night?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you think of the Scotchman?"

"Well, sir, he is a queer man, stopping in the hotel, but a good one I think."

"He fees me liberally and took me to the theater with him."

"You have kept your eyes upon the chambermaids in the hotel?"

"Yes, sir, but they are not guilty."

"You think?"

"I feel sure of it, sir."

"And the bell-boys?"

"Are innocent, sir."

"You feel confident of this, Billy?"

"I am certain of it, sir."

"And the porters?"

"The porters and firemen are not guilty, sir."

"How about the guests?"

"That is what must be found out, sir."

"You have a suspicion of some one?"

"I would not accuse any one, sir, until proof of guilt was assured."

"Well, Billy, you must stay on duty all you can and keep up your detective work for me."

"I will, sir."

"I heard at the hotel office that you did one-third more time than the other boys?"

"Yes, sir, I wish to make all I can," was the hesitating reply.

"You have those depending upon you for support, I suppose?"

After a slight hesitation the boy said:

"I have those I love, sir, to think of."

"Where do you live?"

"I have a room, sir, to myself."

"You had better give me the address, in case I need you?"

"Well, Mr. Richards, I spend most of my time at the hotel, so you would hardly find me at my room, sir."

"Well, here is some money for you, and remember to keep a close watch at the hotel for any one of a suspicious nature, and send me word here at once."

"I will, and I thank you, sir."

"When do you go on duty for all night again?"

"To-morrow night, sir, for I am free until then, unless I wish to make six-hours' time to-morrow."

"Don't overwork yourself, Billy."

"Now, good-night," and when the lad left the hotel he was shadowed by the detective.

CHAPTER XV.

DICK DOOM MAKES A DISCOVERY.

THE following night the disguised detective did not occupy his box at the theater, greatly to the disappointment of many who had gone purposely to see Dixey's impersonation of him.

For reasons of his own the actor did not introduce his take-off of the Scot, and he would not respond to the *encores* which it was hoped would induce him to do so.

Billy the Bell-Boy went on duty at eight o'clock at the hotel, and recognized the detective, whom he knew as "Mr. Richards," as he passed through the corridor.

Dick Doom however did not appear to see Billy and soon passed on out of the hotel.

It was a cold, stormy night, and Dick Doom got into a cab and drove down to Police Headquarters.

The chief had gone home, so he drove to a number not far from where Billy lived, and alighting from the cab, bade the driver await his coming.

He went at once to the boy's number, opened the door as before, ascended to the top floor, and halted.

He had seen no one, and though the gas burned in the lower halls, there was no light in the upper one.

His magic key let him into the little parlor as before.

There was fresh coal upon the fire, but the gas was not burning, as the boy would be out all night.

All was in perfect order, and neatness rested upon all in the little home.

Taking from his pocket a bunch of keys, after

closing the blinds and lighting the gas, the detective set to work for a thorough search of the premises.

He took out his note-book and began leisurely with the locked draw in a writing-desk, a pretty piece of furniture in one corner of the parlor.

He jotted down notes of what he found here, and seemed much interested.

He left all as he found it, so that no one could have told that a paper had been disturbed.

Once more he looked over the photograph album carefully, and then went to the bedroom.

Under the bed was a large, strong trunk, and upon one end was a name which Dick Doom wrote down.

The magic key opened the trunk, and in the bottom, among a lot of clothes, was found a tin box, also locked.

But this yielded to Dick Doom's key, and he gave a whistle at the contents of the box.

He saw there a lot of money—bills, gold and silver, and some jewelry.

He looked carefully over the latter, noting down just what it consisted of, and then counted over the money.

"Seven hundred in gold, ninety dollars in silver, and four thousand in bills.

"A pretty large sum for one to have in his possession who is only a bell-boy in a fashionable hotel.

"Billy the Bell-Boy is, I may say, quite a rich youth."

The money and other things in the box were noted down, the articles in the trunk were looked carefully through, and all replaced as found.

The trunk was relocked and put back under the bed, and next the detective went to the rear rooms.

His search was deliberate, and though his notes were made in every case where he did not care to trust to memory, and he left nothing unlooked at.

Every drawer, closet and receptacle fell under his eyes, and it was only after three hours had gone by that he seemed satisfied with his work.

He then opened the blinds, as they had been, put out the gas, glanced about the rooms to see that he had left nothing undone that might betray the presence of a visitor, and left the flat.

Without seeing any one in the halls he made his way out, and going to the waiting cab gave the driver an order where to drive.

It was to the hotel where Billy, the Bell-Boy was working, and he nodded to the lad as he passed through the corridor and approached the office.

To his question regarding Dixey's being in he was told that the actor would doubtless be back from the theater within half an hour.

He strolled about the hotel, went to the parlors and thence up to the floor, where, as Mackent Mackento h, he had a room.

Watching to see that he was unobserved he slipped into his room and closed the door.

Half an hour after a man in the garb of a clergyman came out of the room.

He wore a high hat encircled with crepe, his clothes were buttoned close, a white tie and standing collar gave him a benign expression, which spectacles added to.

His overcoat was also of clerical cut, and his gloves were black kid.

There was an expression upon his face which was a cross between the woeful look of an Irish undertaker and a heathen Chinese, so doleful was it, for his chin was dropped, the corners of his mouth drawn down, and his eyes had a far-away gaze, as though he had asked himself the question:

"What shall I do to be saved?" and had received the response:

"Read the answer in the stars."

He made his way to the office, and to the amazement of the clerk, who was handing him a pen to register, asked in doleful tones to see:

"Mr. Dixey, the actor."

He handed over his card, and Billy, the Bell-Boy was sent up with it to the actor's room, and to the clerk's surprise returned with word to:

"Show him up."

"The Sky Pilot has gone up to pray for poor Dixey, or ask him for a contribution," said the clerk, with sympathy, in either case, for the actor.

CHAPTER XVI.

"PARSON DICKSON."

HENRY DIXEY arose to greet his visitor, for there had come to him a card upon which was the name:

"REVEREND RICHARD DICKSON."

But the card was turned down at the corners in such a way that it brought back to the actor the remembrance of what Dick Doom had told him about receiving any one who came with the pasteboard so marked.

When the detective entered the room the actor felt that he saw a stranger; but he received him politely, bade him be seated and handed to him a box of cigars.

Billy the Bell-Boy left after showing the visitor in, and refusing a cigar the latter said:

"Shall I have to introduce myself to you, Mr. Dixey?"

"Ah! you are then Dick Doom?"

"Yes, Mr. Dixey."

"The last time I saw you, Dick Doom, was in petticoats, so I failed to recognize."

"I have been a little suspicious of your sex ever since, and am glad to know after all that I have not to depend upon a woman in this detective work, though you can certainly impersonate one to perfection."

"A mistake in a disguise in my work, Mr. Dixey, might spoil a case and cost me my life."

"I have called to know if you have any news to communicate."

"Not a word."

"You have heard nothing of your Peruvian friend, Aquero?"

"Nothing, for he is in Peru, I suppose, at this time."

"Have you written him of the loss of his jewels?"

"No, for I had hopes of recovering them before I need worry him with their loss."

"If he returns, you will pay him for them?"

"Yes, though, as I am not overburdened with riches, as much as I have made, and am making, it will cramp me."

"Still, in honor bound, as the jewels were left to my safe-keeping, and they have been stolen, I shall hold myself responsible and pay Aquero every dollar of value he puts upon them, if it breaks me."

"You take the honorable course, Mr. Dixey, as I felt that you would; but we must hope that you will not have to pay the money, and that the jewels will be found."

"Have you any clue, Dick Doom?"

"There is complication, mystery and surprises in the track I am on, Mr. Dixey, a wheel within a wheel, so to speak, and yet I believe that the secret key to the situation is nearer to being found out than when I last saw you," was the guarded response of the detective, while the actor replied, with a slight show of impatience:

"I confess that I cannot see all this mystery attached to what looks to me only as a very clever robbery of my trunk by some party unknown."

"Still, I see more in it than a robbery of Henry Dixey, the actor, by parties unknown."

"And you keep your suspicions under cover?"

"I never express a suspicion of any man or woman until I have proven that my suspicion is a certainty; but now let me ask you if you have thought over among your intimate friends one single person whom you might have even the shadow of a suspicion of?"

"Not one, and it would hurt me to feel that I had such a false friend."

"Circumstances, temptations and stern necessity, Mr. Dixey, have caused the noblest men to go wrong, yes, and women, too."

"I hear many prate against one who has sinned, being very severe upon him or her, as the case may be; but I always ask such unkind slanderers if they have ever been tempted, and resisted, under like circumstances."

"I see you are a moralizer, Dick Doom, as well as a detective; but you are right in what you say."

"One must moralize to be a successful man-hunter, Mr. Dixey."

"A detective must get at the bottom of human nature, understand the motive that prompts, diagnose a character as a doctor does a disease, and then he can know where to strike."

"It is a good argument, indeed, and from your words I fear you suspect some one of my friends."

"No, no more than any one else who has access to your rooms; but may I ask to look at that photograph of Mr. Aquero again?"

"Certainly, there is the album."

Dick Doom looked at the photograph attentively, and asked:

"Is there anything written on the back?"

"Yes, take it out and look at it."

The detective did so, and read aloud:

"To my esteemed friend, the preserver of my life,

"HENRY E. DIXEY,

"With the devoted friendship of

"ANTONIO AQUERO,

"September, 18—."

The detective looked even longer at the writing than he had at the photograph, and closed the album without any comment, which caused Henry Dixey to ask:

"Why do you lay so much stress upon Aquero's photograph?"

"It is a question I hardly know how to answer."

"He is the loser, or would be, if I did not recompense for at least the intrinsic value of the jewels, which I believe are heirloom."

"I have studied your face and motives, Mr. Dixey, just as closely as I have the Senor Aquero's," was the calm response of Dick Doom, and the reply puzzled the actor more than he cared to admit, for after the detective departed he muttered:

"That clever ferret intends to implicate some one whom I least suspect in this robbery."

CHAPTER XVII.

SOME LETTERS.

THE second day after his visit to Henry Dixey, in his character of the Reverend Richard Dickson, Dick Doom sat in his pleasant rooms in the hotel which he made his headquarters in the city, and where he was known as Richards.

His mail had just been brought to him, and seated before the fire, after breakfast, he prepared to open his letters.

The first he took up was in a large envelope, and opening it he took out a photograph.

The letter was as follows:

"NORTH PLATTE, NEBRASKA, Nov. 28th, 18—."

"MR. D. RICHARDS:—

"MY DEAR SIR:—Your letter received with inclosure, asking for photograph of party you described and whose name you gave as Antonio Aquero, with all information of the person in question which it is in my power to give."

"The photograph I send you I made two years ago, and the gentleman was a Peruvian by the name of A. Aquero, for so he wrote it upon my books."

"He was a handsome man of thirty, well built, dressed with elegance and spoke English well."

"He told me that he had come to North Platte to purchase a ranch, but had not done so, as the death of the owner had put off the sale indefinitely."

"Observing my rooms he had dropped in to have a photograph taken."

"I learn that he left our town the day after, and know nothing more regarding him, and can find no one to give me the slightest information about him."

"With respect,

"W. H. BROACH,

"Photographer."

Dick Doom glanced fixedly at the photograph and said:

"It is from the same negative as the one that Dixey has."

Then he took up another letter and read:

"OFFICE SOUTH AMERICAN S. S. Co., }
Nov. 30th, 18—."

"MR. D. RICHARDS:—

"MY DEAR SIR:—We are just now able to give you the information asked for regarding Antonio Aquero."

"The name was registered upon our books for passage on our Thursday steamer, upon the date you gave us, and his passage was paid."

"His name therefore appeared in the published list of passengers; but the captain of steamer, just returned to port, informs us that Mr. Aquero left the ship at Havana, with the excuse that opening his mail after he left, he found that he must stop at that port."

"This is all the information we can give regarding the gentleman, excepting that our captain represents him to have sailed with him before and knows him to be a man of large wealth and belonging to an aristocratic old Spanish family in Peru."

"Yours truly,

"WILLIAM DONNELL,

"Agent."

Another letter was from the chief of police at Washington, stating that "Antonio Aquero was reported by the acting Peruvian minister to belong to a prominent family of wealth, and after traveling extensively abroad he had visited the United States, where he had spent four years as a cadet at a military school, from his twelfth to his sixteenth year."

He had met in Washington society a young lady who was a reigning belle, rich and beautiful, and was engaged to her."

He had left for Peru some months before to make all his arrangements for settling in the United States."

In conclusion the name and address of the lady was given, and Dick Doom jotted them down in his note-book.

A fourth letter was from the proprietor of the hotel in Washington where Mr. Antonio Aquero had lived for months, giving the information that he had lived in expensive quarters, had his carriage and horses and paid liberally and promptly for all he got.

"He certainly has a good character from every quarter," muttered Dick Doom as he took up a telegram, addressed also to "D. Richards."

Breaking it open he read as follows:

"Sent you message by cable and telegraph as directed, and return you herein the amount left over from the payment you made on the same."

"With n is the answer received."

"OPERATOR W. U. TEL. CO."

The answer was dated at Lima and read as follows:

"Senor Antonio Aquero left here eighteen months ago, and now in United States."

"Seek information at Peruvian Legation."

Dick Doom turned to his table and wrote as follows:

"CHIEF OF POLICE,

Havana, Cuba:—

"Antonio Aquero, Peruvian, arrived on South American steamer, Sept. 1st. Find him and wire full particulars. Information secret."

"DICK DOOM,

Special Officer, U. S. Secret Service."

"Care Chief of Police, New York, U. S. America."

A messenger was called and dispatched with this, in a sealed envelope, to the main office of the Western Union Telegraph Office, it having been franked as on "Government business."

Late that night the answer came:

Antonio Aquero arrived as stated, left next day for Panama."

"Now I will go and make an exchange of photographs," said Dick Doom, with no comment upon the telegram from Cuba, and going to the hotel where he was known as Mackent Mackintosh, he watched his chance, slipped into his room, then into Dixey's, and quickly placed the photograph sent him by Broach of North Platte into the album, taking out the one that had the writing on the back.

Unless Dixey removed the photograph from the album he would not observe the exchange.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MYRTLE MARSDEN.

THE day after the reception of the letters and telegrams by Dick Doom, a slenderly-formed woman, well-dressed and heavily-veiled, came out of the detective's rooms at the hotel where he lived, and going out into the street made her way to a carriage-stand.

"To the Hudson River Day Boat," she said, and she reached the up-town landing just in time to catch the Mary Powell as she touched the wharf.

At the Tarrytown landing the lady went ashore, and after some conversation with a hackman, entered his vehicle and was driven away toward the country.

After a drive of twenty minutes the vehicle turned into a large arched gateway, wound through handsomely-ornamented grounds, and drew up at the massive stone steps of an elegant mansion.

A servant in livery met the visitor at the door, and carried her card up-stairs, after ushering her into the richly-furnished parlors, where paintings and works of art were to be seen upon all sides.

Presently there came a rustle of silk upon the stairs, and there entered the parlors a young and beautiful girl of perhaps twenty years of age.

Her hair was of golden hue, her eyes large, darkest of blue and dreamy, and her form perfect, and clad in a gown of blue silk that was most becoming.

"Miss Dickson," she said in a rich, low voice as she glanced at the card she held in her hand.

"Yes, and you are Miss Myrtle Marsden?" replied the visitor.

"Yes, I am Miss Marsden, and may I ask if I fail to recall an old acquaintance, for your vail is beyond penetration."

"Pardon me," and the visitor raised the vail, and added:

"No, we have never met before, Miss Marsden, but I have sought you to have a confidential conversation with you, if you will permit."

Miss Marsden looked surprised but politely said:

"Be seated, please, and let me know how I can serve you."

"That is just it, Miss Marsden, for you can serve me—not that I need aid, but I seek information which you can give me, if you will."

"I never make rash promises, Miss Dickson, so ask what you will and then I will understand what to reply."

"Do not believe me impertinent, nor prompted by idle curiosity in what I ask, for it is of interest rather; but may I inquire if you are acquainted with Senor Antonio Aquero?"

The face of Myrtle Marsden flushed at the direct question, but she replied calmly:

"Yes, Mr. Aquero is a friend of mine."

"You have long known him?"

"Some two years."

"May I ask where you first met him?"

"I first met him abroad, in the Italian mountains, where he rendered our party a signal service."

"And again in Washington City?"

"Yes."

"Is he now in the United States, Miss Marsden?"

"He is not."

"Where is he, may I ask?"

"At his home in Peru."

"Thank you."

"Will you answer one question more, and which is decidedly personal."

"Upon one condition, yes."

"Name the condition, Miss Marsden."

"It is that you give me your motive in coming here and making these inquiries."

"I shall do so, Miss Marsden."

"Then to the personal question?"

"Are you engaged to the Senor Antonio Aquero?"

An indignant light flashed in Myrtle Marsden's eyes, but she answered calmly:

"I am."

"Thank you."

"Have you a photograph of him?"

"Several."

"May I see them, Miss Marsden?"

"Something in your face and manner prompts me to answer your questions and do as you request, so I will show you the photographs, though I shall bold you to your conditions."

"Do so, Miss Marsden."

Myrtle Marsden arose and left the parlor, but soon returned with several photographs.

These she handed to her visitor who looked at them attentively.

One was like the photograph Dixey had, and that which had been sent by Broach, the photographer, from North Platte, Nebraska, to Dick Doom.

Another was taken in the uniform of a captain in the Peruvian Army, and several years prior to the one given to Dixey, for it appeared younger.

A third was more recent and taken by Sarany in New York City.

There was a fourth in the garb of a gentleman rancher, taken on horseback and in a mountainous country, evidently by an amateur photographer, for there was no name upon it.

"May I glance at what is written on these photographs, Miss Marsden?"

"You may," was the low response.

The visitor did so, and upon the back of each photograph something had been written other than the name.

"I have a photograph here that you may see, Miss Marsden, and also read what is written upon it, but remember our conversation is confidential."

"I will so regard it," and Myrtle Marsden took the photograph handed to her, and glancing at it, cried:

"Why, this is one Mr. Aquero gave to Mr. Dixey, the actor, who saved his life at Long Branch!"

"Yes, it is the same," said the visitor.

"May I ask you how you got possession of this photograph?"

"I will tell you, Miss Marsden, for it will explain why I came to see you."

CHAPTER XIX.

MISS DICKSON UNEARTHS A SECRET.

MYRTLE MARSDEN seemed really impressed with her visitor, for there was something about the serene, handsome face and self-possessed manner of Miss Dickson that commanded respect.

"You have been so kind, Miss Marsden, to put up with the very pointed questioning of a stranger, that I wish to now prove my appreciation of it by telling you why I came to see you, but again let me beg that all that passes between us shall be held in strictest confidence."

"I shall so consider it, Miss Dickson."

"Then let me tell you that I am a detective."

"Ah! a woman detective?" asked Myrtle Marsden in surprise, and she added, with a smile:

"I thought that it would be the last service for a woman, as you know men say our sex cannot keep a secret."

"It depends upon the woman and the secret."

"But I am a feminine ferret, and as such was called in to try and fathom the robbery of a certain distinguished person of some rare jewels."

"Ah! another actress advertising her stolen jewels?" asked Miss Marsden, with a smile.

"On the contrary, this is an actor, and he seeks no advertising by giving publicity to his loss, for he has demanded that the robbery be kept a dead secret."

"And an actor?"

"Yes; one who does not have to resort to clap-trap for his advertising, for I refer to Mr. Dixey."

"Indeed! I have met him and admire him greatly, for after an evening with Mr. Aquero at the theater, he was invited to join us at supper and did so."

"I am sorry to learn that he has been robbed, and hope that the loss was not heavy."

"Yes, the value of the jewels will go as high as fifty thousand dollars, if not more."

"I am so very sorry to hear this."

"Mr. Dixey lives at a hotel, and the jewels were taken from his rooms there, the thief having to open no less than four locks of peculiar design to get at them."

"Mr. Dixey reported his loss to the proprietor and the chief of police, and insisted that the robbery should be kept a secret, while he has been as anxious to catch the thief as to recover the gems."

"I hope that he will do both."

"The chances are that he will, for there are good Secret Service men upon the scene."

"And one woman," Miss Marsden said with a smile.

"Yes."

"But let me say that these jewels did not belong to Mr. Dixey, but were intrusted to his keeping by a friend."

"That makes it harder for Mr. Dixey."

"It does, for the friend is away from the country, and knows not of his loss, so that Mr. Dixey is anxious to get both jewels and thief before his return."

"I trust that he may do so, certainly."

"I also have that hope."

"But there is another strange thing about this robbery, for in the same trunk with the stolen jewels, were Mr. Dixey's own jewelry, in value about five thousand dollars."

"This was not touched, though a pin, given Mr. Dixey by the friend, to whom the other jewels belonged, was taken from the little box in which the actor kept his own property."

"This is remarkable indeed."

"So remarkable, Miss Marsden, that it suggested to me that the robber was no common person, and had a deep motive for this deed of taking only the jewels belonging to Mr. Dixey's friend, and the pin given to him by that friend."

"It would certainly seem so, Miss Dickson."

"But can you find no clue?"

"I have clues and clues, see motives and motives, but yet have not been able to find a missing link to make the chain complete, and so I called upon you for help."

"Upon me?"

"Yes."

"How can I help you, Miss Dickson?" asked Miss Marsden in evident surprise.

"When I tell you that Mr. Antonio Aquero was the one who owned the jewels, and who left them in Mr. Dixey's keeping, you may better understand."

"Mr. Aquero left those jewels in Mr. Dixey's keeping?" slowly asked Miss Marsden.

"He did."

"Are you sure?"

"I have Dixey's word for it, Miss Marsden."

"Then it must be so, though I was not aware that Mr. Aquero had any jewels of such value in his possession."

"Might he not have and you not know the fact?"

"It is possible, yet not probable."

"Why do you think so?"

"I will tell you frankly that Mr. Aquero left in my keeping certain jewels, until his return."

"What they were he told me and gave me a list, though I never opened the box. I insisted that he should take the key with him, but this he would not do."

"He told me then that all his family jewels were in that box, for after his mother's death, they had been sent to him to Washington, where he was then sojourning."

"Then you certainly have good reason for believing that he had no others, though he did intrust to the keeping of Mr. Henry E. Dixey the actor, gems to the value of fifty thousand."

"Those he left with me, and which I will frankly tell you, he said should be mine, he told me were over that amount in value."

"Have you them?"

"Oh, yes, in the safe in my library, and which I know the combination of."

"Oblige me please by giving me a list of those gems, Miss Marsden," and there was a strange expression upon the face of Miss Dickson as she made the request.

CHAPTER XX.

MISSING.

UPON leaving the parlors to obey Miss Dickson's request Miss Marsden went across the hall to the library.

It was also elegantly furnished, the walls were hung with five engravings in unique frames and there were hundreds of rare books, for the room was a very large one.

In one corner, on the right of the large fireplace was a massive desk against the wall.

Going up to this Miss Marsden touched a spring, the bronze lion's feet casters of the desk raised a couple of inches, and with a slight effort of strength at one corner the massive desk swung around on hinges that had not before been visible.

Behind the desk, in the solid wall the panneling looked as it did in other parts of the room; but a slide was raised, revealing the iron door of a safe, some eighteen inches in width by two in length.

It had a combination lock, which Miss Marsden adjusted and opened the door.

Within was an iron space set in the solid wall, with drawers and cuddies, and all were filled with papers, some buckskin tags of gold, rolls of bank bills, and several boxes evidently containing jewelry.

One of these Miss Marsden took out, and she started, and her face paled as she did so.

Hastily she took a key from a drawer and opened the box, when from her now ashen lips came a moan, followed by the words:

"My God! the jewels are gone!"

"I have been robbed of them."

"You have been robbed of Mr. Aquero's jewels, Miss Marsden?"

At the voice behind her Miss Marsden uttered a slight cry and turned.

She beheld Miss Dickson, who had noiselessly followed her to the library.

Miss Marsden's face was as pale as a ghost, her lips moved, but she could not speak for full half a minute, and sinking into a chair she seemed deeply moved.

"You can trust me, Miss Marsden," and there was a world of kindness and sympathy in the words of the visitor.

"I will trust you," cried Myrtle Marsden, regaining her composure and speech.

"Yes, Mr. Aquero's jewels are missing."

"I have been robbed of them."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, I am sure."

"They were in that box?"

"Yes."

"Who else knew of your having them?"

"My father."

"Where is he?"

"Away for a few days."

"Perhaps he—"

"No, no, he would never touch them, for the things in this part of the safe are mine."

"Who knows of this safe?"

"Only our old and trusted butler, Buttons, who has been in our family a quarter of a century."

"No one else?"

"Yes, my old nurse, now our housekeeper."

"She nursed my mother."

"They know of the safe?"

"Yes, that it is in the wall, hidden by this desk; but they do not know the combination, and if they did all within would be safe."

"You were to show me a list of the articles of jewelry left with you by Mr. Aquero?"

"Yes, it is here."

Miss Marsden opened an upper drawer of the safe and took therefrom a paper.

Glancing at it, she handed it to Miss Dickson. The latter looked over it carefully, without a change of expression.

Miss Marsden watched the face of her visitor anxiously as she did so.

"Miss Marsden, allow me to ask you to look over your list while I read from my note-book the articles stolen from Mr. Dixey."

Her hand trembled as she took the list from the visitor, who took a small morocco-bound book from her pocket and read as follows, deliberately and with a distinctness that seemed to grate upon Miss Marsden's ears:

"One diamond necklace and bracelets to match."

"Yes," almost sighed Miss Marsden.

"One emerald necklace and bracelets to match."

"Yes."

"One ruby necklace and bracelets."

"It compares with my list so far."

"Two watches studded with gems, and chains."

"Yes."

"A diamond back-comb with gold prongs."

"Yes."

"A pearl comb with silver prongs."

"Yes."

"Then follow lockets, rings, ear-rings and hair-ornaments."

"The same are on my list, Miss Dickson."

"Then the jewels of Mr. Aquero, stolen from Mr. Dixey, were first stolen from you."

"It would seem so."

"But I cannot understand it all—no, I cannot understand it," said Myrtle Marsden in a quivering voice.

"Mr. Antonio Aquero left these jewels in your keeping?"

"He certainly did."

"You were engaged to him, they were jewels that belonged to his mother and grandmother, doubtless, and he intimated that they were to be yours?"

"Yes."

"And Mr. Antonio Aquero left those same jewels with his friend Henry E. Dixey, asking him to keep them until his return from Peru."

"I do not comprehend it, Miss Dickson."

"It surely is complicated, but I see but two ways of accounting for it."

"Oh, tell me," cried the unhappy girl.

"Either they were found by Mr. Aquero, or taken to him to purchase them back from the thief, and if he informed you of their loss the letter miscarried, or—"

"Or what?"

"Antonio Aquero knew the combination of that safe and took those jewels himself," and the words of Miss Dickson caused Myrtle Marsden to cry out as though in great pain.

CHAPTER XXI.

A MOST COMPLICATED CASE.

MISS DICKSON saw that her words cut Myrtle Marsden to the quick, for they implicated her lover, the man she had promised to marry, and whom she believed true and noble above all men.

For a moment only did Miss Marsden show weakness, and she rallied quickly, regaining her self-control, while she said:

"Miss Dickson, your words are a charge against the man I love with all my heart and soul, and nothing but his own confession of guilt could make me believe he would commit a crime."

"Miss Marsden, it is such love and trust as yours that makes men better in this world, and I admire you for your faith in the man you are pledged to; but it is my province as a Secret Service officer, to suspect every one and any one, and try and tear the mask of virtue from the face of vice."

"I do not say that Mr. Aquero robbed you, in robbing himself; but I do say that these very jewels that have been taken from you, were given by Mr. Aquero to Henry Dixey to keep for him until his return from Peru."

"I do not deny that they are the same."

"It cannot be otherwise from the list."

"And Mr. Aquero gave them to you?"

"Yes."

"And Mr. Aquero gave them to Dixey also to keep for him."

"It would seem so."

"You were robbed of them?"

"Yes, they are gone."

"And Dixey was robbed of them?"

"You have told me so, and I cannot doubt you."

"Did Mr. Aquero know the combination of this safe?"

"Yes, for he has seen me open it several times, and I said to him when I put the jewels away, that in case both my father and I should die he ought to know the combination."

"And you showed it to him?"

"Yes."

Miss Dickson looked serious, but asked:

"Do you know, Miss Marsden, Mr. Aquero to be a rich man?"

"I am sure that he is."

"What proof have you of it?"

"My father is president of the Gotham Bank, you may know, and Mr. Aquero has deposited very largely there at times, while drafts for large sums upon his bankers in Peru have always been honored."

"This would appear that he was rich, though

there can be tricks in that kind of business, through handling other people's money."

"But you are rich, Miss Marsden?"

"My father is a man of large wealth, and I am his sole heir."

"Worth a million, I believe?"

"He is worth double that sum, he has told me, Miss Dickson, for I am his secretary."

"I will not detain you much longer, Miss Marsden, but let me beg that you do not speak of the loss of those jewels, even to your father."

"Do you mean this?"

"I do, for it is better so."

"How?"

"I will find those jewels, Miss Marsden, and the thief as well."

"If Mr. Aquero is innocent, you shall know it the first, and if he is guilty, you shall have every proof that you are engaged to one who is wholly unworthy of you."

"If he is guilty, I will forever bless you for proving it to me."

"Yet what could be his motive?"

"If he is not a rich man, those jewels, left in the care of Henry Dixey, and stolen from him, would be paid for by the actor, who is a man of unimpeachable honor."

"That money would enable Aquero to keep up his show of being rich until he could make you his wife, and you are your father's sole heir, while the jewels, which may not be real gems, would be yours, hence his, and if bogus stones, then will have served his purpose."

"You reason well for and against; but I will have to have proof before I doubt the man I love."

"You are right, and I would say remain true as steel until you know the whole truth; but remember, do not breathe a word of this, even to your father."

"I will keep the secret, Miss Dickson, never fear."

"And I will let you hear from me, perhaps see me from time to time; but should you wish to have me call, or you glean any tidings, send a note to the care of the New York Chief of Police, and I will respond at once."

"Now good-by, and do not let this worry you until you are convinced of Mr. Aquero's guilt."

"I will try not to worry," was the low reply, and Miss Marsden closed the safe, put the desk back in place, lowering the bronze feet to the floor once more, and then escorted her visitor to the door and saw her drive away in the waiting hack.

"That woman impresses me strangely, and yet I trust her perfectly," she muttered, as the vehicle rolled away from the door.

Miss Dickson drove to the station this time, caught a train for New York, and an hour after entered the rooms of Dick Doom in the hotel where he was registered as D. Richards.

In fact "Miss Dickson" was none other than Dick Doom himself, in one of his feminine disguises, as the reader has without doubt surmised.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN ACTOR OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

AGAIN Henry Dixey received a card, the name on which was unknown to him, yet he told Billy the Bell-Boy to show the visitor up to his rooms.

There was something about the card that urged him to do this, for, a man of distinction in his profession, he very naturally received hundreds of callers, and even more letters which he could not, or would not, pay any attention to.

Cranks of all kinds called upon him, love-sick maidens wrote to him, impecunious friends, knowing of his success, constantly importuned him for the loan of an X or a V, and yet, though generous and full of charity, he could not heed one-tenth of the calls upon him.

But this card read:

"BARRETT BOOTH BROWN,

"TRAGEDIAN,

"Of the Old School of Acting."

It was Sunday morning, the actor had risen late and had just finished his breakfast, so was glancing over the morning papers, so bulky in size, yet so full of interesting and instructive matter.

Billy the Bell-Boy threw open the door with a suppressed smile upon his handsome young face to admit the "Tragedian of the Old School of Acting."

And no wonder, for the man who was known as Barrett Booth Brown looked like one of the old school.

He wore a cloak of black broadcloth instead

of an overcoat, and one flap was thrown up tragically over his left shoulder.

His boots were pointed at the toes, the heels were high, and his rather tight-fitting black pants were held down with straps.

Upon his head was a black slouch hat, of the Italian banditti style, and when he threw off his cloak it was seen that he had a velvet vest, with red dots in it, a ruffled shirt, and blue swallow-tailed coat and brass buttons.

His collar was high, and he wore a sable silk stock in lieu of a cravat.

Then he slowly drew off his black kid gloves, his eyes fastened upon the comedian of the new school of acting the while.

Dixey had risen at his coming, and his pale, mobile face was very serious as he saw his visitor, though the corners of his mouth twitched with a smile.

"Mr. Booth Barrett Brown, I believe?" he said, politely.

"I am, sir," was the decided response, as though the speaker's name had been called into question.

"How can I serve you, Mr. Brown?"

"I will tell you, sir, when that girl-faced monkey has left the room."

His reference was to Billy, the Bell-Boy, who had stood grinning at the tragedian until reference was made to him, when he shot out of the door like a rocket, at which Dixey, glad of an excuse, burst out laughing.

The tragedian then strided, rather than walked, toward Dixey, thrusting his fingers through the long, black locks that fell upon either side of his head, while his hair in front was banged, in fact worn just as the young girls in Philadelphia wear their hair to-day.

He wore a glass in one eye, was smooth shaven, and had an expression as though he was constantly making a speech.

"Be seated, Mr. Brown, and, as a brother actor, allow me to take the liberty of asking you why you did not set your B's up in line to read Brown Barrett Booth, giving the most famous name last?"

"Because, sir, Booth is not the more famous name, as there are more Browns than Booths."

"Granted. Pardon my unwise suggestion and tell me how I can serve you."

"Do you not know me, sir?"

"I have heard all these names, sir, I admit, yet must confess to never having had the honor of meeting you personally before."

"Not to know me, sir, is to argue yourself unknown."

"Very true, sir; but that is my misfortune and not your fault."

"At first, when I received your card, from a certain something about it, I supposed it was a visitor whom I was expecting."

"And I am that visitor, Mr. Dixey—Dick Doom, the detective, and at your service," said the supposed tragedian of the old school of acting, in his natural voice, to the great amazement of the actor.

Henry Dixey sprang to his feet and held out his hand, while he cried:

"Dick Doom, you are the most thorough actor I ever saw!"

"Why did you not go upon the stage?"

The eyeglass dropped from the left eye, the face assumed its natural expression, and the wig of long black hair was removed, while Dick Doom said, seriously:

"I am an actor, Mr. Dixey, and my stage is the world, my audiences the good and the bad of man and womankind!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CHIEF STARTLED.

HENRY DIXEY was silent for a minute after the discovery of who his visitor was, and then said:

"I have told the chief, Dick Doom, that you could not deceive me again; that you would be known, no matter what your disguise, the moment I set eyes upon you."

"In fact, I had a bet with the chief that I would recognize you, and I have lost, even after you sent the marked card, which led me to suspect that it was you."

"How on earth can you so change yourself, for you are a couple of inches taller; you look as thin as a free lunch fiend, and your expression was that of a man passed fifty."

"Well, it is art I suppose, some might say genius, for you have the same talent, if I may so put it, of impersonation, taking the real when I take a type."

"For instance, how well you took off that Scotchman who attended the theater several times."

"If applause was a criterion I made a hit,

but then he was such a guy and so easy to take off."

Dick Doom smiled and replied:

"I have come for another talk with you about those stolen jewels."

"Fire away."

"But have you any news to tell me?"

"I wish to know something more of Aquero?"

"Well?"

"When did he leave those jewels with you, or that is, how long before he sailed for Peru?"

"The night before, for he came to me after the theater, and sailed the next day."

"Did he say anything to you about them?"

"I do not remember that he did, other than that they were heirlooms."

"He was engaged?"

"Yes, or had been, you know."

"To a Peruvian lady?"

"No, a very beautiful American girl, for I met her once, and saw her in a box at the theater several times."

"She was an heiress as well, I believe."

"Did he tell you that the jewels had ever been stolen?"

"He did not."

"And he gave you no idea of their value?"

"None."

"He seemed to always have money?"

"Oh, yes, in that way he appeared to be amply provided."

"Did he refer to any date when you might expect him back?"

"He said he would be absent for some months, that was all, and that I could well understand, as he was going to Peru."

"Well, Mr. Dixey, although I can give you no direct information in regard to the jewels, I can at least tell you that I have found another link which goes to make up the chain of evidence."

"Ah! against whom?"

"I do not know."

"I have observed that you are particularly interested in your questions about Aquero, the loser of the jewels."

"Hardly, for you will pay him their full value; but to get at bottom facts I must begin at the fountain head."

"I will see you again before long," and removing his wig, he took up his hat and cloak and departed.

Billy the Bell-Boy saw him as he went through the office, looking every inch a man of tragedy, and he watched him until he saw him take a cab and drive away.

"Some poor actor whom Mr. Dixey has helped, and now he is flush he takes a carriage instead of the street-car," resumed Billy as he gazed after him.

Upon arriving at his other hotel, Dick Doom made his way up to his rooms, slipped in unseen, and was soon in his character of D. Richards.

Writing a note he dispatched it by a messenger, and soon after the chief of police called.

"Well, Dick, I answered your note in person, to have a talk with you, and the two men you wrote for I have ordered to be here in half an hour."

"Thank you, chief, I wish to put them both on the same mission."

"It is important then?"

"Only to track a boy."

"Ah! a boy mixed up in this diamond deal then?"

"Well, yes, sir."

"Have you made any discoveries, Dick, for you have not been near me of late?"

"I have made a discovery, chief, and I will tell you what it is."

"Well, Dick, you know best."

"Those Dixey diamonds, as you always speak of them, were stolen by some one from a lady, in whose care Aquero left them, and then, left to the keeping of Henry Dixey, they were again taken."

"Dick Doom you startle me."

"I was startled myself at the discovery, sir, when I made it."

"This complicates matters, for Aquero, you say, left the jewels with a young lady?"

"Yes, for her to keep for him, as he is engaged to her."

"And they were stolen from her?"

"They were, sir, though she did not know of the theft until I called on her two days ago, and she went to look them up at my request."

"Aquero left them with her?"

"Yes, sir."

"And Aquero left them with Dixey?"

"Yes."

"Were they the same jewels?"

"Here is a list I obtained from the lady, and another list from Dixey."

"See if they are not the same."

The chief glanced at the two lists and cried emphatically:

"The very same, by Heaven!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

TO SHADOW A BOY.

THE chief continued to gaze at the two lists until he had convinced himself beyond all doubt, that the those stolen from the lady in question, and the ones of which Henry Dixey had been robbed were the same.

"What do you make of this double mystery, Dick?" asked the chief after a while.

"What is your opinion, chief?" asked Dick Doom answering the question by asking one.

"I should say that this looks bad for Antonio Aquero."

"Upon the face it does, and that was the opinion I formed, sir."

"He was engaged to this lady?"

"It was."

"And will return to marry her?"

"Oh, yes, for she is very wealthy."

"You will watch for his return?"

"I am watching now, in case he should anticipate his expected time for returning."

"Could he have given those jewels to the young lady and then stolen them from her, to give them to Dixey to keep and then steal them from him?"

"If he did, his purpose was a most sinister one, chief, and he is playing a very deep game."

"For gain."

"It can be for nothing else that I can see now; but these must be your men."

A knock came upon the door, as Dick Doom spoke and in answer to his call two men entered.

One was an elderly man, the other about twenty.

They saluted when they saw the chief, and not knowing Dick Doom, one of them said:

"We were told to report here, sir, to Mr. Richards."

"This gentleman is Mr. Richards, Barney."

The two men turned to the detective, who said:

"I wish you for special duty men, for you are to shadow a boy."

"Yes, sir."

"To do so successfully you must not act together but separately."

"We will, sir."

"One of you had better go to quarters and rig out as a hayseed, an old farmer, and the other as a drummer, having your sample cases."

"Yes, sir," they replied in chorus.

"The one I wish you to follow is Billy, the Bell-Boy, and he is at the — Hotel."

"He is off duty at midnight, and you are to shadow him wherever he goes; but to save you as much trouble as possible here is his address, and he will doubtless go there."

"If he does, then he will make an early start for the country, just for what point I do not know, but I have a suspicion that it is Jersey, and he is to be shadowed to his destination."

"When you have placed him, return to me and report just where it is, only let me know who he has gone to see and anything else you can find out of use to me."

"You, sir, who are to play the drummer, can go there as a peddler, so fit yourself out accordingly."

"We have peddlers' packs all prepared for just such work, Mr. Richards, and all kinds of disguises," the chief said.

"That is the very thing, then."

"Men, here is money for your expenses," and Dick Doom handed each man some money.

Thanking him they took their leave, and then the chief said:

"Both of these men are good ones, Dick, but why would not one do?"

"Because one might lose the game; two would hardly do so."

"Very true; but you told me the other day that this boy Billy was in your pay as a detective."

"He is, chief, and that is why I wish to get better acquainted with him and what he does."

"I see, you doubt him."

"Until I know my man, chief, I have him shadowed, or shadow him myself."

"Then I know just who I am to trust."

"And therein lies the secret of your success, Dick."

"But, by the way, I won a bet from Dixey upon your deceiving him in your disguises."

"Yes, he said he had lost a bet; but that rig did change me greatly, and I confess that I really did look like a back number of the foot-lights."

"From Dixey's description of it, I wish I had seen you in it."

"You may some time, chief; but now I have work for some of you to do."

"Certainly, I shall be glad to aid you."

"I wish you to kindly send word to all the South American steamship lines, those that run to the West Indies, the Bermudas, Mexico and Southern ports, to have one of their special officers on the watch for Antonio Aguero's coming."

"Ah! you think, then, he will return quietly?"

"Yes, perhaps *incog.*, and I wish to learn of his arrival, and just where he goes."

"If he returns openly and goes to the hotel where he stops, of course the time and money spent in watching for him are thrown away; but then if he returns secretly, it will be time and money well spent."

"I confess that I can see no motive for his returning secretly, Dick."

"He did not go to Peru."

"What?"

"He did not go to Peru as he intended."

"Do you know this?"

"I have the proofs," was the calm reply.

CHAPTER XXV.

LINKS IN THE CHAIN.

THE chief became more deeply interested than ever, at the words of Dick Doom, and said:

"Let me have the proofs, Dick."

"Well, chief, he sailed for Peru, as I before stated to you, but left the ship at Havana."

"I wired the chief of police at Havana, to find that he had sailed from that city two days after his arrival, and I have a letter, received to-day, following the telegram."

"The letter states that passage was engaged on the vessel, a sailing vessel mind you, for Antonio Aguero, from Havana, before the coming of that gentleman to Havana."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and he sailed for Panama, and I have word from there that he crossed to the Pacific, but did not take a vessel down the coast to Peru, though he engaged passage on one."

"Instead, he returned across Panama, and then I lost track of him, or rather my informant did, and that is why I am now watching all of the Southern and South American steamers for his coming."

"It seems strange how he has tried to give the idea of going to Peru, by engaging passage, and yet has not gone."

"Even to the extent, chief, that should his leaving the steamer at Havana be discovered, he went to Panama and engaged passage on the steamer down the Pacific."

"This would look as though he was trying to throw some one off his track."

"It certainly does look so, chief."

"May he not, after all, have gone on to Peru?"

"No."

"You are sure?"

"I have news from Peru that he has not arrived there."

"You have not been idle, Dick."

"I have been trying to find the owner of those jewels, chief, as well as the thief."

"I see, you connect the owner with the thief."

"I make no charges against any one yet, chief, only if I find the owner of the jewels I will be able to trace the motive for the double robbery of them, the robbery of the two persons to whom they were intrusted for safe-keeping."

"Did you find out the difference in time between their being left with the lady and with Dixey?"

"Yes, it was just three months to the day."

"And the discovery of the theft of them from the lady was not known until you called upon her?"

"No."

"There was no feigning on her part?"

"Oh, no, she is above that and true as steel."

"She believed the jewels in her keeping until I asked her to look for them."

"Of course you know who she is, so can judge, Dick."

"She is Miss Marsden, the daughter of the millionaire banker."

"Ah, she is wealthy and could have no motive for underhand actions, while knowing her now, I am aware that she is one of the noblest of women."

"I wish to know as soon as possible just where this Billy the Bell-Boy goes to-morrow, and I will doubtless learn something I am anxious to find out."

"Then I desire to know of the return of

Antonio Aguero, whether he comes openly or secretly, and I will be better able to act."

"You lay considerable stress upon the movements of that bell-boy, I see."

"Yes, I do."

"And I cannot shake out the belief that some one of Dixey's intimate friends is the thief."

"I have the same belief, chief."

"You?"

"I thought that you believed that Aguero was connected with the robbery, for I have gleaned that from your movements and conversation."

"I may, yet is not Aguero one of Mr. Dixey's intimate friends?"

"True, yet what motive would he have in robbing himself?"

"That is just what I am anxious to find out."

"When I know the motive I know the thief, and knowing the thief I shall recover the jewels," was the confident reply of Dick Doom.

"Well, Dick, you are a clever schemer and I always wager on your winning."

"Dixey believes in you too, yet for the sake of a bet, he wagers against you, and we have a hundred up on the result."

"You will win, chief."

"Egad, Dixey will be glad to lose to have you win the game of solving the mystery you are playing, and I would give much to have you do so."

"I well know that; but I will win."

"You are most confident."

"Do you think Antonio Aguero left jewels worth fifty thousand dollars in Henry Dixey's keeping not to return for them?"

"I see your point—you are sure he will return?"

"Sure."

"But if he be the thief?"

"He will still come for them."

"Why?"

"Should he not do so he would bring suspicion upon himself."

"Very true."

"Then, too, thief or honest man, he will return to claim his prize in life's lottery."

"What prize is that?"

"Myrtle Marsden, the millionaire banker's daughter," was the smiling response of Dick Doom.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SHADOWS' REPORT.

THE night following the conversation just related, between the chief of police and Detective Dick Doom in the rooms of the latter at his hotel, the two men sent to shadow Billy the Bell-Boy returned.

They sent up their names to "Mr. Richards," and attired in their disguises were ushered up to the rooms of the young detective.

"Ah, gentlemen, you have returned?" said Dick Doom, recognizing them at a glance, through their make-up, one as an elderly farmer, the other as a peddler.

"Sit down and let me hear what you have done."

"You first, please," and he looked at old Hayseed.

"Well, Mr. Richards, we found things about as you said, for the boy went to his home for the night and left it at seven in the morning."

"He took the train for Red Bank, New Jersey, and there got a hack to take him on to his house."

"Seeing him talking to the driver I asked, as I went the same way, if I couldn't ride along too, for small pay, and the boy told me to jump in at his expense."

"A few miles out he stopped at a handsome country home, and, as I said I wanted to go further on, he gave the driver extra money to take me there."

"I felt sorry to be shadowing him then, but business is business, and duty is duty, so I rode on until I told the driver I could cut across fields and sent him back."

"I did cut across fields, made a circuit and came back into the road and waited for Brewer, here, who was coming along as peddler."

"I soon saw him coming and told him the house where the boy stopped and he went on while I returned to the hotel in Red Bank to await his coming."

"He will tell you now what he did."

"You did well, Mr. Barney, and now, Mr. Brewer, I'll hear your story," said Dick Doom.

"Well, sir, I struck the place about an hour after the boy arrived."

"Describe the place, please."

"A large mansion, surrounded by ornamental grounds and mossy acres of finely cultivated lands."

"The home of a rich farmer?"

"Yes, sir, of a very well-to-do widow, sir."

"Her name, please?"

"Hartwell, sir."

"Well?"

"She is a Peruvian lady, sir, but married an American naval officer, and came to America to live."

"His father dying left him that home, and at the naval officer's death, six years ago, Mrs. Hartwell and her two children were left his fortune, which was considerable, I learned."

"Was the boy one of her children?"

"Yes, sir, for she has a son and daughter."

"And Billy, the Bell-Boy, is the son?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the daughter?"

"Is away at boarding-school, sir, I learned."

"You saw the home?"

"Yes, sir, and it is an elegant one."

"Did Billy remain there?"

"No, sir, he came back to Red Bank, and took the evening train for New York, though neither Barney or myself dared let him see us."

"You were right; but did you gain access to the home?"

"Yes, sir, for they gave me dinner, though they did not buy anything I offered for sale."

"What kind of a woman is Mrs. Hartwell?"

"A handsome, red-faced woman, sir, and she speaks English with a slight accent."

"You too have done well, Mr. Brewer, and I thank you both for your services."

"But did Billy, the Bell-Boy, go on duty again to-night at the hotel?"

"Yes, sir, he went to his rooms, changed the clothes he had worn during the day, and returned to duty at eight o'clock."

"Having seen him back where we had shadowed him from, we returned to report to you."

"Thank you," and with a reward for their services that seemed to please them by its liberality, the two shadowers took their leave of "Mr. Richards."

An hour after Dick Doom passed through the corridor of the hotel where Billy worked, and saw the boy on duty.

He made his way to his room—which he held as Mackent Mackintosh—and soon changed his dress for that of the Scotchman.

Ringling his bell a boy promptly presented himself, but he told the lad to send Billy to him.

The boy disappeared on his errand, and told Billy, adding:

"You gits all the big fees, and now I s'poses that Scotch freak wants ter give yer a dollar jist for nothing."

Billy laughed and went hastily up to the room of Mr. Mackintosh.

"Well, Billy, my lad," he said in his broad Scotch accent, "where have you been all day that other boys have had to look after me?"

"I went home, sir, to see my mother."

"That was a good lad."

"Does she live in the city?"

"No, sir, out in the country."

"What do you call the country here, Billy?"

"Out in New Jersey, sir."

"And would you rather work here in the wicked city all alone, than live in the country with your good mother?"

"No, sir, only I must work, for there is a duty for me to perform," and the boy half-turned away as tears came into his eyes, and his voice quivered with emotion.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DIXEY'S DISCOVERY.

THE disguised detective seemed touched at the sudden feeling shown by the boy and said quickly:

"Come, come, lad, I did not mean to hurt you by anything I said, only I think one of your age, who could be with his mother, under her sheltering care, should be there."

"Oh, sir, if I *could* only be! But I cannot—no, I cannot!"

"I went home to-day and saw the spot I loved so well, the dear old place where I was born, and my poor mother's face told me plainly that she was anxious and longed to have me with her."

"It moved me deeply, sir, and when you spoke of my mother just now, it all came back to me again."

"Well, lad, you have a good heart, and you should return to your mother, and not remain in this wicked city."

"No, sir, *no*! I cannot!"

"Is she so poor, then, as to need your aid?"

"No, sir, it is not that; but then I have a duty to perform, one I have devoted my life to."

"You have been kind to me, Mr. Mackintosh, but I can say no more, not even to you."

"Where does your mother live, lad?"

"I cannot tell you that, sir."
 "You will not, you mean?"
 "I must say yes, sir, I will not."
 "Can I not help you in the trouble you seem to have upon you?"
 "No, sir, no one can help me, save perhaps one other than myself."
 "Can I not be that other?"
 "No, sir, you could do nothing, though you are ever so willing."
 "Will you not tell me who the one is that can help you?"
 "I will only say, sir, that it is a detective, and though he may not know that he is aiding me, I feel that he is doing so and can do so."
 "Well, lad, I will pry no more into your affairs, but I sent for you to ask you to notify Mr. Dixey that I wish to see him to-night, upon his return from the theater, and also to tell you good-by, for I leave here at an early hour."
 "You leave the hotel, sir?"
 "Yes."
 "Will you not give me an address that will reach you, sir, for I have a motive in asking, though I cannot explain it."
 "Yes; address me here, at the hotel, for I will send here for my letters."
 "Thank you, sir."
 "Now, Billy, here is a souvenir for you," and the detective placed a ten-dollar gold-piece in the hand of the boy.
 Billy shrunk from taking it, muttered something that was inaudible, but dropped it into his pocket.
 "Let me know when Mr. Dixey will receive me, Billy."
 "Yes, sir," and the boy left the room, while a strange smile crossed the face of Dick Doom—one that seemed like a smile of triumph.
 An hour after Billy knocked at the door and said that "Mr. Dixey would be glad to see Mr. Mackintosh."
 The disguised detective followed Billy and was ushered into the actor's pleasant rooms.
 Dixey was alone, and cordially greeted the supposed Scotchman, who said:
 "I am going to take my departure, Mr. Dixey, and wish to thank you for the pleasure you have given me and to say good-by."
 "So you did not get angry with me at my unkind impersonation of you, Mr. Mackintosh?" asked Dixey, smiling.
 "No, indeed; I enjoyed it. But it was no impersonation of myself."
 "My friends flattered me by saying it was perfect," and Henry Dixey looked a little chagrined at the view taken of his clever work by the one he had copied.
 "I grant that it was clever of Mackent Mackintosh, the Scotchman, but not of me."
 "Why, you are—"
 "Dick Doom, at your service, Mr. Dixey," and tearing off his wig and false beard of a Scotchman, the detective stood revealed.
 "The devil!" exclaimed Dixey, astounded at discovering in the one he had impersonated the Ferret of the Golden Fetters.
 "No, Mr. Dixey, I lay no claim to being his Satanic Highness, simply Dick Doom."
 "You are the Wizard of Secret Service men surely; but does the chief know how I was fooled?"
 "He did not know it until afterward, sir."
 "The truth is, I took a room here to watch those who visited you, and I have discovered enough to cause me to give up my quarters and the placing of Mackent Mackintosh, so I leave the hotel in that character to-night."
 "But you surely do not give up the case?"
 "Oh, no, I never leave a trail until I see the end of it, and I am just now striking the right track."
 "You have made some discovery of importance?" quickly said the actor.
 "I have nothing yet that is tangible."
 "When you have you will tell me?"
 "Yes, and do not worry about those diamonds."
 "One must feel a little blue at the thought of having to give up a fortune if they are not found, but I am not one to repine over what must be, and what cannot be cured, you know, must be endured."
 "That is good philosophy, Mr. Dixey; but good-night," and resuming his disguise the detective returned to his room, leaving the actor still more impressed with the man he had engaged to hunt down the thief who had stolen the Aquero jewels.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DICK DOOM VISITS THE COUNTRY.

DICK DOOM had heard enough from the shadowers of Billy, the Bell-Boy, to decide upon

going himself to see what he could discover of the mysterious lad, who, with a handsome and luxurious home, from all accounts, had gone to accept a situation in a hotel where the pay, even with fees, could not be very great.

He therefore set out for the home of the lad in New Jersey, going in no disguise as was his wont so often to do.

Arriving in Red Bank he hired a horse and buggy at a stable, confident from the description given him by the shadowers that he could readily find the place.

He drove for several miles into the country, and then came in sight of a large and handsome mansion.

Extensive grounds surrounded it, with many acres of land on either side.

The fences were all in good order, there were large outbuildings, and upon all these rested an air of prosperity and comfort.

He drove in through the massive gateway, hitched his horse, and to the servant who came to the door gave his card, that of D. Richards, and asked to see Mrs. Hartwell.

Soon after a lady of slender, graceful form entered, and with a dignity of mien that was commanding.

Her black hair had in it here and there a silver thread, but her large black eyes were full of expression and still a handsome woman of forty, she showed traces of having possessed wondrous beauty in her younger years.

She was dressed in black, and yet wore a diamond breast-pin, earrings and rings, all of considerable value.

"May I ask to what circumstance I am indebted for Mr. Richards's call upon me?" she asked with a slight accent and with a manner that plainly said she was anxious to know why the visitor had called.

"If you will allow me a few minutes, Mrs. Hartwell, and pardon me, a stranger, for calling upon you, I will explain my mission," was the answer.

There was something in the face of the detective, the tone of his voice and manner that commanded respect and quite broke through the icy reserve of the lady, for she said:

"Certainly, sir, be seated, please."

Dick Doom sat down only when Mrs. Hartwell had done so, and then said:

"Mrs. Hartwell, I have been stopping at the hotel where your son is."

The words were few, but telling, for the lady turned pale and asked anxiously:

"Has harm befallen my—my poor child?"

"No, no, I have no tidings of pain to communicate, only I have taken a fancy to Billy, and—"

"Billy?"

"He is so known at the hotel, madam."

"Ah, yes, yes; but did you come to me from him?"

"I did not, for he would not give me your address."

"Then may I ask how you knew of my dwelling here?"

"My dear lady, I became interested in your son, and sought to find out more of him."

"I am engaged in a certain work which I sought his aid in, which I was sure that he could help in, and seeing him often I became more and more interested in him and regretted to see him alone in a large and wicked city."

"Alas! sir, that has been a source of more regret and anxiety to me than you can ever know."

"Feeling this interest in your son, I sought to find out more about him, and did so."

"What did you discover?" came the quick, startled question of the mother.

"I discovered that he could greatly aid me in the work I had on hand, that he was most circumspect in all his actions, a good, upright boy, living by himself in genteel quarters, shunning his companions all in his power, though ever polite, kind, and generous to them, and that he wished to keep his real name and home hidden from all."

"And how did you find out all this, sir, though I am much pleased to hear your good account of him?"

"I spoke of some work I am engaged upon, madam."

"Yes."

"I am a detective."

"You a detective, sir?"

"Yes, madam."

"And you have tracked my son out here?"

"Only, madam, for the purpose of becoming more intimately acquainted with him, with one whom I must trust to help me in my work."

"Well, sir?"

"I tracked him here when he came to see you,

two days ago, and so now call upon you myself."

"For what reason, Mr. Richards?" and Mrs. Hartwell spoke with marked coldness.

"Mrs. Hartwell, I see that I have not inspired you with confidence, in stating to you that I am a detective."

"I cannot understand your business with me, sir."

"It is to serve you and your son, for I am tracking one who is known to both you and your son."

"It may be that he is all that is noble, that you are both attached deeply to him, and I may be wrong in my surmise regarding him; but in my profession we must often cut deep to heal, and I can spare no one until that one is proven guilty or guilty."

"I refer, Mrs. Hartwell, to Antonio Aquero, as the man whom I am tracking," and the eyes of Dick Doom were riveted upon the woman's face as he uttered the words.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A SKELETON IN THE CLOSET.

At the name of Antonio Aquero Mrs. Hartwell gave a start, and her face assumed a deeper pallor.

She felt that the eyes of the detective were upon her, and with a powerful effort at self-control she asked:

"Do you know Senor Antonio Aquero, sir?"

"I must answer that I have never, to my own knowledge, met him."

"You spoke of him just now as one whom you wished to find?"

"Yes, madam."

"You referred to him as one you sought, for reasons you did not give, yet stated that you were a detective?"

"Yes, Mrs. Hartwell, I am a detective, and I seek Senor Aquero for reasons I have not given."

"This would imply that he has been guilty of some wrong."

"No, I do not so say, yet I assert that he is under suspicion of guilt."

"What is he suspected of?"

"Mrs. Hartwell, as I told you, I came here to aid your son, and if my surmise is right, I believe that he knows Antonio Aquero."

"Am I right?"

Mrs. Hartwell remained silent and Dick Doom continued:

"I am a detective, and yet I am one with a heart for those who I find may suffer through the wrongs of others."

"To explain, I was engaged upon the work I now have in hand, and of which your son may have told you, knowing Aquero as I am sure that he does."

"Mr. Henry E. Dixey, the famous actor, was robbed of jewels left in his keeping by Antonio Aquero, his friend."

"Mr. Dixey's own valuables were not taken, other than a pin given him by Aquero, and this was abstracted from the jewel-box of the actor, all else remaining untouched."

"The stolen jewels are valued at fifty thousand dollars, but this large sum Mr. Dixey is prepared to pay Aquero on demand, as in honor bound."

"When I called on Mr. Dixey, in disguise, the keen eyes of your son detected me, and he spoke to me, asking to be employed on this case as my ally."

"I saw that he was no ordinary person, and I accepted his services."

"In other disguises, which he did not penetrate, I saw and studied your son, I had him shadowed, tracked him to his rooms and knew him to have been raised in refinement, to have been educated, considerable of an artist and musician, and yet a bell-boy in a hotel, accepting fees from the guests, which he did not need, as I discovered that he had plenty of money."

"There was some motive for this strange life of his, and I sifted it until I am sure that he is doing detective work himself, and more, that Antonio Aquero is the man he is on the track of."

"I had him shadowed to his home here, and so I came to see you, for, if I can get the story of your son's wrongs, and why he tracks Aquero, from you, then there is no need for the lad to lead the perilous life he does as I will take all responsibility off his shoulders."

"Now, Mrs. Hartwell, you understand my position, and that I am the friend, not the foe of you and your son."

"I do understand now, Mr. Richards, and I feel that I can trust you," said the lady warmly.

"Do you not think I have found out enough

for you to tell that I can get at the bottom facts, but which you can help me to arrive at much sooner?"

"Well, I will try to help you."

"What would you know?"

"Whose photograph is this?"

The detective held out the likeness of Antonio Aquero as he spoke, the one he had taken from Dixey's album.

"It is the photograph of Senor Aquero."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, for my son has one from the same plate."

"When did your son meet Aquero?"

"Nearly two years ago."

"May I ask where they met?"

"At a ball given at Long Branch."

"Then Aquero has been here?"

"Yes, several times."

"When did your son last see Aquero?"

"About a year ago?"

"Where?"

"In Sante Fe, New Mexico," and some memory evidently moved Mrs. Hartwell greatly, for she trembled violently.

"He has not seen him since?"

"He has not."

"But to find him went to New York and took the place of bell-boy in a fashionable hotel."

"Yes."

"Then he has some grievance against Aquero?"

"Yes, as I have."

"You have a daughter, Mrs. Hartwell?"

The answer came faintly:

"Yes."

"Where is she now?"

"I sent her to Boston to boarding-school."

"Then she is away from home now?"

"She is."

"Mrs. Hartwell, do you mind telling me if, and how, Antonio Aquero has wronged you and yours?"

"No! no! I cannot do that, for that is not my secret."

"It belongs to another who may some day tell you, but I cannot do so," and Mrs. Hartwell seemed deeply affected by some little remembrance.

CHAPTER XXX.

ANOTHER DEAL IN DIAMONDS.

DICK DOOM left the Hartwell mansion thoroughly convinced that there was a skeleton in the family closet that Mrs. Hartwell would not reveal to him.

He had gained at least the confidence of Mrs. Hartwell, and he carried from her a letter to her son, telling him that she felt that the bearer, Dick Doom, for the detective had given her his real name, and shown her his badges of office, was their friend and could be trusted fully.

With this she left it for her son to act, as to placing confidence or not, in the detective.

Dick Doom saw that Mrs. Hartwell held some deep sorrow, that she was bearing up bravely under an affliction, which she would not reveal.

But he had gained a point in finding out that Billy, the Bell-Boy, was secretly a detective, awaiting at the hotel for the coming back of Antonio Aquero, for a purpose which Dick Doom was yet to find out.

That Aquero had wronged the Hartwells in some way Dick Doom felt assured, and this went far toward convincing him that he having been guilty of one crime might also be guilty of having stolen his own jewels, both from Miss Marsden and Henry Dixey.

It then remained for Dick Doom to await the return to New York of Antonio Aquero and abide the result.

"If he has taken those jewels the natural belief would be that he would not return; but then he left no debts behind him, and he did leave a prize in Miss Marsden, which he will not give up, so he will return."

"Then, too, he has the chance of getting the value of the jewels from Dixey, and yet having possession of them too."

"Yes, Antonio Aquero, in spite of his strange wanderings, after leaving New York for Peru, apparently, will return, and then will be my time to play my trump cards."

"He will suspect no plot against himself, I am certain."

So mused Dick Doom on his way back to New York upon the train.

To relieve Mrs. Hartwell's mind, he had promised to write her daily, and though he had asked the letter from her to her son, he had requested to be the judge of whether he should present it or not, and had begged the mother not to speak to Billy of his visit to her, or that she knew of him, and this Mrs. Hartwell had promised.

Upon reaching New York, Dick Doom, having given up his room as Mackent Mackintosh at the hotel where Dixey dwelt, went to his own quarters direct, and began to look over the mail that had arrived for him.

He had reports from the chief of the men set to watch the incoming steamers from foreign ports, and a man who had been detailed to visit daily every hotel in the city and see just who had arrived each twenty-four hours.

But one note particularly attracted his attention, and it was as follows:

"MY DEAR DOOM:—

"Come to see me the moment you get this, at hotel or theater, wherever I may be."

"Yours,

"DIXEY."

Ten minutes after, Dick Doom was on his way to the hotel, hoping to find Dixey there.

But the man told him the actor had dined and gone to the theater, for it was after seven o'clock.

"Mr. Dixey told me if I saw you, Mr. Richards, to tell you to hurry to the theater, for it was important," said Billy, the Bell-Boy.

"All right, Billy, I will go there at once."

"Have you any news?"

"No, sir, nothing; but I saw a man on Mr. Dixey's floor, coming out of his room last night, and he told me he had been sent for a costume left there."

"I told Mr. Dixey of it this morning when I came on at noon, and he said that he had sent for no costume, and half an hour after he rung for a messenger and sent a note to you."

"All right, Billy."

"What kind of a looking man was it you saw?"

"A roughly-dressed man, sir, who said he was one of the stage hands from the theater."

"He had Mr. Dixey's card and keys, to get the costume; but I am sure there was something wrong about it all."

Dick Doom said something to Billy about keeping a close watch on Dixey's rooms, and then hastened away to the theater.

He was at once admitted to the actor's dressing-room.

Henry Dixey grasped his hand warmly, sent his valet out of the room and said:

"There is more work for you, Dick Doom."

"I am ready."

"I have been robbed."

"Well?"

"My own box of jewelry was taken last night."

"What?"

"This time it is the Dixey diamonds."

"You mean that your room was entered again, and your diamonds taken from your trunk?"

"I do."

"Good! now the thief has sprung the trap upon himself," was Dick Doom's response.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LOSS A GAIN.

"I FAIL to see, Doom, just how you consider the loss of my diamonds a good thing," said Dixey with a smile, as he put some paint upon his face to make up as "Adonis."

"In just this way."

"Four keys such as you have are not readily found—"

"You have a set?"

"Oh, yes, it is my business to be able to open locks; but there can be but one other set than yours."

"One would think so."

"Now, the one who got the Aquero jewels did so with duplicate keys, and that same one has now gotten the Dixey diamonds."

"Yes."

"Since the stealing of the Aquero jewels the thief has either been in hiding, or away."

"He has now returned, or come out of his hiding place, so I can catch him."

"You made no hue and cry about the other loss, the public do not know it, and the thief trusts it will be the same now, and must be."

"I must keep it a secret?"

"Yes, for I can work the better for its not being known."

"You are the doctor, Dick Doom, so prescribe and I'll take the medicine."

"And the medicine will cure the disease."

"I'll see you later, but now I go to take a look at your rooms."

"Here are my keys."

"Thank you, I have my own," and the detective left as the actor was called to the stage.

Straight to the hotel went Dick Doom, and Billy showed him up to the actor's rooms.

The detective opened the outer door and en-

tered, telling Billy he would see him later, and to give a note, which he had hastily written, to a messenger to take at once for him to the one to whom it was addressed, finding him where he was, and for the answer to be brought to the bell-boy.

The note was addressed to the chief of police.

After Billy had left, the detective went into the inner-room, unlocked the closet, then the large trunk, and next the lower compartment in the bottom.

It was empty, for the jewelry-box of the actor had been taken.

For some time the detective stood regarding the situation, lost in deep meditation.

"The man who stole the Aquero jewels robbed Dixey of his own diamonds."

"There is no doubt of that."

"Now to find that man," and thus musing Dick Doom relocked the trunk and closet and returning to the parlor took a seat and became buried in thought.

A tap at the door about ten o'clock aroused him.

It was Billy the Bell-Boy, and he was accompanied by the chief of police.

"Ah, chief, my messenger found you."

"Yes; and I came with him to Billy here, who brought me to you."

The bell-boy disappeared and the chief threw off his coat and hat and took a seat.

"You have news, Dick."

"Dixey has been robbed."

"That is ancient history, Dick."

"I mean a second time."

"What?"

"He has been robbed of his own valuables, for this time it is the Dixey diamonds."

"You astound me."

"I was not so much surprised, chief."

"When was it?"

"Last night when he was at the theater."

"How did it happen?"

"The thief came here, Billy saw him, armed with Dixey's card and keys, pretending to come for a costume."

"It was the same one who took the Aquero jewels, for he got the Dixey diamonds from just where he had taken the Aquero jewels."

"This is remarkable."

"Oh, no, he intends to make a clean sweep."

"Is there no clue?"

"Yes, chief."

"What is it?"

"It was the same one who took the jewels of Aquero."

"That one has not been found."

"Not yet, but he will be."

"He's awful clever."

"Have any reports come in from the steamer lines?"

"Nothing new."

"Then I want a score of your best men to start early to-morrow and discover any stranger in the city at hotel or boarding house, yes I want fifty men to do the work and do it well."

"Let them bring their reports to you, chief, as soon as made, and please send them to me, for I may find the man I want among the very first reported."

"You shall have the men, Dick."

"But about the steamship lines?"

"Take the men off, there, and only request list of arrivals to be sent you the moment they can be obtained, if you please, chief."

"I will do so; but what does Dixey say about his loss?"

"Takes it in his usual matter-of-fact way, sir."

"Well, he has certainly been hit hard in the two robberies, and I hope you can help him out, as I believe you can."

"I am more than ever convinced, chief, that all will come our way in the end."

"To-morrow I will be in my rooms all day, should you get any news, and now I will leave you to await Mr. Dixey's return, while I take my departure," and Dick Doom left the chief in possession of the actor's rooms.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TRACKED.

THE detective went through the corridor of the hotel upon leaving Dixey's rooms, and came upon Billy, the Bell Boy, to whom he said:

"You go off duty at twelve, Billy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then go straight home, for I have work ahead for you."

"Yes, sir, I will."

Passing on Dick Doom sprung upon a passing car, and soon after was at his own hotel.

He wrote several letters, went down to the

office of the hotel and mailed them, after which he walked off up the street.

It was half-past twelve o'clock when he halted at the door of Billy, the Bell-Boy's quarters.

Billy had already arrived, for a light was visible in his parlor windows, so the detective let himself in and went noiselessly up-stairs, to the top floor.

He knocked lightly upon the parlor door, and at once heard a movement within, then, after a short delay a step, and the door was opened by Billy, who evidently expected to see the janitor, for no other visitor was expected there.

He started back, and his face paled as he recognized the man whom he knew as Mr. Richards.

"Mr. Richards!" he almost gasped.

"Yes, Billy, and I have come to have a talk with you," and the detective pushed his way into the room, closing the door behind him.

"How did you find me, sir?"

"Oh, I have known where you lived ever since I met you!"

"Mr. Richards!" and Billy spoke reproachfully.

"Sit down there, Billy, before the fire, and let us have a long, serious talk together."

"Well, sir?" and Billy dropped into a chair.

"Billy, have you ever heard of Dick Doom, the Ferret of the Golden Fetters?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"What have you heard of him?"

"Well, sir, there have been books written of him, and he is so mysterious no one knows anything about him."

"They say that the police and detectives do not know him even by sight, and it is reported that he is a young lad, a girl and a man."

"Anything else?"

"Yes; they say that he never loses a case he undertakes."

"And I do not intend to lose this case, Billy!"

"You, sir?"

"Yes, for I am Dick Doom!"

"Oh!" cried Billy, in amazement.

"You saw me as the Woman in Black, as the Quakeress, as Mr. Richards, as Mackent Mackintosh, and now I'll tell you the secret that I am Dick Doom, the Ferret of the Golden Fetters."

"See here, Billy," and Dick Doom threw open his coat and showed to the amazed bell-boy his badges of office.

"Now, Billy, you have been helping me in this Dixey diamond hunt more than you have any idea, and you can help me still more."

"I wished to know who it was that I was trusting, and so I had you shadowed, and knowing your address, I came to your rooms before to-night."

"Oh! I am lost!"

"No; you are found, Billy."

"But let me tell you that I had you shadowed to your home, and I then went there and saw your mother."

"My mother?" gasped Billy.

"Yes; and here is a letter she gave me for you."

The boy's hands trembled as he read the letter, and his voice was almost inaudible as he said:

"What do you wish me to do sir?"

"Tell the truth."

"I will!"

The words were firmly uttered, and the boy's eyes flashed fire as he spoke.

"That is right, Billy, and you will find me your friend and your mother's."

"I believe you, sir, for from the first I have held perfect confidence in you."

"Well, Billy, when I came to your room it was for a purpose, as you may know."

"Yes, sir."

"I brought with me my skeleton keys, so that gave me access to your rooms."

"I saw that you lived here alone."

"I discovered that you were an artist of real talent, and amused yourself in your leisure time with painting."

"I saw your piano, with music upon it, and that it was the home of one reared in refinement and with expensive tastes."

"I saw that you did not take your meals here, that everything about your little flat was neat and in order."

"The janitor told one of my shadowers that you cared for your own quarters, and that you were a young artist, and lived alone until your mother came to join you."

"He said that you paid your rent in advance, had been generous toward him and his wife, and that you were the best tenant they had."

"I with my skeleton keys, then went on a voyage of discovery, and shall I tell you that I found here a photograph of Antonio Aquero, the Peruvian friend of Mr. Dixey?"

At the words Billy's head dropped and he buried his face in his hands and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE MASK REMOVED.

FOR some minutes the detective did not speak, but allowed the boy to weep uncomfited.

Then he said:

"Shall I tell you, Billy, another discovery that I made?"

"Say anything," was the low response.

"Well, I found every evidence that you were not the sole occupant of these rooms, for there were tiny slippers and the wearing apparel of—not your mother—but a young girl."

"Yes, sir."

"After mature deliberation and closest search, I came to the conclusion that you were the sole occupant of the flat, in other words, that Billy the Bell-Boy was none other than a girl."

"Ah!"

"This secret I did not tell to your mother, and she does not know that I am cognizant of the fact, while she would not betray you, would not tell me that which she left for you to make known to me."

"And I will!"

"I will tell you every word of the truth and by it you shall judge me," and the disguised woman sprung to her feet and confronted Dick Doom with flashing eyes.

After an effort at self-control she said:

"I do not wonder that you win your cases, Mr. Doom, for you leave nothing undone, and you have tracked me down, driven me to the wall."

"I am not a boy, but a woman, for I am eighteen years of age, and a wife."

"My name is Helen Hartwell, and I have a twin brother, Harold Hartwell."

"He is now absent, having gone to Peru for my sake."

"And Aquero?"

"I do know Antonio Aquero well."

"I know him so well that I ran away from boarding school and married him, or rather I should say that I knew him so little that I did so."

"I was just sixteen, and I was a romantic fool, worse than most girls are at my age."

"I met him at Long Branch, heard him sing love songs, saw him ride horseback and heard that he had traveled the world over and killed a fellow student in a duel."

"That was enough to turn my silly, romantic head, and it did."

"He came to Boston, visited me at the school, and fascinated, infatuated with him, I ran away with him and we were married."

"My mother told not of my sinful act, but let it be thought that I was still at boarding-school."

"I went West with Aquero, after telling my mother all by letter, and asking her to send me my jewelry and other things."

"She did so, and simply wrote:

"May God forgive you, and only happiness be yours."

"Should sorrow come to you, come back to me."

"I had some money in my own name in bank, and Aquero had me draw it out, just two thousand dollars in all."

"He took me West to Denver and there left me for several weeks, while he looked up a home."

"Then he returned and we went to Santa Fe, near which place he had purchased a ranch, he told me."

"I went willingly; but I soon learned from a Mexican woman to whom I had been kind, that my husband was playing me false, and intended to have me put to death."

"She was to do the work, for pay, he was to rob the ranch, and it was to be set down as the work of Apaches, while he went his way."

"He carried out his plot, except that I did not die, for the plotting of the Mexican woman saved me, and I escaped."

"I rewarded her well for saving my life, and in disguise left the country."

"I came to my home and told her and my brother all."

"My brother had seen when Antonio Aquero had sailed for Peru from San Francisco, and he at once took the train West and left in the next steamer to follow him."

"But I did not believe that he had gone out of the country, and soon after saw a notice in the New York Herald where Antonio Aquero had given Dixey the actor a supper as he intended starting soon for Peru."

"I at once decided upon my course and my mother could not argue me out of it."

"I went to New York and found that Aquero had sailed; but I did not believe it, for why had

he published his departure from San Francisco, and not gone?"

"I felt that the place to see Aquero was at the hotel where Mr. Dixey lived, and so I decided to act."

"I went to the proprietor and asked for a place for my brother, and it was granted."

"Then I secured these rooms, furnished them, and, amply supplied with money by my mother, I turned detective to await the coming of Antonio Aquero, for I felt sure that we should meet again."

"And your purpose when you meet him?"

"He is at heart my murderer, he robbed me of all I had, except what I had hidden away, after learning what the Mexican woman had to tell me, and my purpose was to send him to prison for his treachery to me, for I now hate more than I ever loved him," was the low, earnest response.

"It would be better for me to bring him to justice, and thus save your good name, while you will at least get your revenge."

"Will you be governed by me in this?"

"Yes," was the prompt response of the unfortunate wife of a cruel adventurer.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE RETURN.

"WELL, Billy, I wish you to give up your position as bell-boy, and, once more resuming your feminine garb, to return to your mother, for she is most anxious regarding you."

"I will, and let me tell you, Mr. Doom, that it has cut me deeply every time I have taken a fee."

"I have given all from strangers to the boys who were my comrades at the hotel, and what Mr. Dixey gave me, and you, as Mr. Mackintosh, I have a list of, to return to you; but for a bell-boy to receive pay would be to betray me," and the young girl smiled faintly.

"Well, go in the morning and square your account at the hotel, give Mr. Dixey's fees and mine to those who were your fellow bell-boys, and pack up your things, resume your skirts and return home, for I will take your flat and furniture off your hands for I rather like these quarters."

"You are very kind."

"Not in the least; but I am anxious to have you once more your natural self, though I must admit that you make a splendid lad, and no one would ever suspect you of being other than you represented yourself to be, except that bell-boys are never so good-looking and refined in manner as you."

"That alone caused me to suspect you, and the more I studied you the more suspicious I grew, until I solved the secret by a visit to your rooms here."

"I will be guided by you, Mr. Doom, in all things, for you have proven yourself my friend, and I am glad to go back to my poor mother, who I know is most anxious about me, as well as my brother Harold."

"That is the wise course to pursue, and you will be happier for it."

"Now I will say good-night," and having said that he would be still found at his hotel, as Mr. Richards, the detective took his leave.

He was up bright and early the next morning, and by the time he had finished breakfast reports began to come in sent by the chief of police.

One of these was to the effect that a man by the name A. Antonio had arrived at a Spanish hotel on the west side, a week before, registered as from Cuba, and a description of him was given.

Dick Doom at once disguised himself and went to the Spanish hotel.

He went as a peddler of diamonds, spoke with the accent of a Spanish Jew, and wished to sell gems to those who cared to buy cheap for cash, half admitting that those he sold had come in without paying duty.

He had quite a long conversation in his room with A. Antonio, but could not persuade him to buy any diamonds, so left in apparent disgust, and returned to his hotel.

What discovery he made he kept to himself, but from that hour A. Antonio was a shadowed man, for Gordon, Barney, and Brewer were put upon his track.

The search among the hotels and boarding-houses by the detectives was also stopped by a note to the chief from Dick Doom, who seemed to feel satisfied with what he had already done.

That afternoon he strolled up to the hotel where Dixey lived, and was told that Billy the Bell-Boy had left, and bitterly his comrades mourned his going, after all his generosity to them.

He did not call upon the actor, but wrote upon a card as follows:

"Expect an old friend back from a voyage soon, and be ready to draw heavily upon your bank account to satisfy his demands."

"All goes well."

D. D."

This he put in a sealed envelope and sent up to Dixey's rooms, where he was dining with some friends.

The next morning the *Herald* had a notice of the return of Mr. Antonio Aquero from Peru, and gave his address as a fashionable up-town hotel.

It was just noon when a card came up to Henry Dixey, the name on it causing him for once to be startled out of his usual serenity of manner.

"Show the gentleman up," he said in a less cheery voice than was his wont, and as the boy left, he gave a sigh.

Soon after, the door opened, and a dark-faced, handsome man entered, and extending his hand, said cordially:

"My dear friend Dixey, I am back again, you see, in dear New York."

He spoke with a foreign accent, and seemed really delighted at meeting the actor.

"I am glad to see you back again, Aquero, but I have bad news for you."

"Bad news! surely Miss Marsden is not—"

"No, it is about your jewels."

"Ah! what of them?"

"What value do you place upon them?"

"Why?"

"I wish to know."

"Their intrinsic value is all of—well, sixty thousand dollars, but as they are heirlooms, no money can buy them."

"Well, Aquero, I can only say that I can give you my checks, on the three banks where I deposit my money, for sixty thousand dollars, for your jewels have been stolen from me."

"Stolen! *Nombre de Dios!* Stolen!"

"Yes."

"And the thief?"

"I have hopes of catching the thief and securing the diamonds; but I wish you to take their equivalent, which you can return if they are recovered."

"My dear Dixey, I feel for you deeply, and I appreciate your noble conduct in paying me, while I am very sorry to say I must accept your checks."

"The truth is my fortune in Peru has been swept away by the speculation of my bankers, and the money for those jewels is all I now possess, and I am engaged to a lovely girl whom I am to marry soon, as you know, so cannot ask her to wed a pauper."

"Had I the jewels I could really have gotten more for them, but—"

"I am sorry, but you said sixty thousand dollars, and that is the extreme limit of my fortune just now."

"Let it go at that, then; but for your sake, Dixey, I hope the jewels will be recovered."

"I certainly most sincerely hope so, Aquero, and I will hunt hard for them I assure you."

"Here are the checks."

Henry Dixey took up one check-book after another and in each wrote out the sums needed to make up the whole.

Never in his life did he sign his name more boldly, and there was not the change of a muscle in his face as he handed over his fortune to the Peruvian.

"Thank you, my dear Dixey."

"Now, tell me of the robbers, and if you have the slightest clue to the thief?"

"I have not, but—Come in!"

The door opened and in stepped three persons. One was Dick Doom, the other the chief of police and the third was a lady heavily veiled.

CHAPTER XXXV.

FACE TO FACE.

HENRY DIXEY and Senor Aquero both looked up in surprise at the coming in of visitors, but before either could say a word Dick Doom stepped quickly forward and a revolver covered the Peruvian.

"Antonio Aquero, I arrest you in the name of the United States, and resistance means death."

"Hold out your hands!"

The man turned to the hue of death, and his teeth clattered together like castanets.

But he held out first one hand, then the other, and Dick Doom slipped about his wrists his famous golden fetters.

"Mr. Dixey, the chief here has something to present you with, namely, the Aquero jewels

and the Dixey diamonds, which we took from this man's baggage."

"As A. Antonio he arrived in New York several days ago and put up at a Spanish hotel."

"His beard and long hair grown in his absence with a different style of dress, disguised him, but shadowed he turned out be Antonio Aquero."

"As A. Antonio he robbed you of your diamonds, for here are his keys, just as he had of the jewels left in his keeping."

"He has an accomplice who has confessed all, and this man came here to get your money for those jewels, having them in his keeping, as well as your own valuables, and then to marry Miss Marsden the heiress."

"But he is a black-hearted fraud, for instead of being Antonio Aquero, he is the twin brother of that gentleman, and one who became a criminal when a mere youth."

"He was supposed to have been killed in Mexico, but instead was in this country as an adventurer and clever scamp generally."

"He is not the one whose life you saved at Long Branch, nor the one who is engaged to Miss Marsden; but, meeting his brother, he professed repentance, played upon his noble heart, gained his sympathy, and then led that brother into a trap to kill him."

"He believed that he had done so, but Antonio Aquero survived the knife wound this Cain gave him, and is now able to appear against him."

"The striking resemblance, even in size and voice, between the two, with all his brother's papers in his keeping, enabled this man to impersonate him, visit Miss Marsden's home as a burglar at night, and with the combination of the safe, in her father's library, which Antonio had written down, he went there and stole those jewels, for among his brother's effects he found but little money."

"The idea seized him to impose upon you, and he did so, leaving the jewels with you, stealing them from you and now coming for his pay."

"His brother went to the chief of police to-day to report what had been done, and so I met him, just now able to be about, and I urged him to at once go to see Miss Marsden, for whose sake, as well as for the sake of others, I have a desire to keep this matter secret, and hence offer this man terms."

"Name your terms," quickly said the accused man, gaining courage with hope of escape.

"My terms are that you confess the theft of Mr. Dixey's diamonds and go to prison on no other charge."

"I confess nothing."

"Then I shall see that you are tried for an attempt to murder your brother, and again for plotting with Mexicans in New Mexico, to kill your wife, for which crimes you can be sent to prison for life."

"It is false! who accuses me?"

"I do!"

The woman, who had stood by in silence, now raised her heavy veil, and the face was that known as belonging to Billy the Bell-Boy.

A cry broke from the man's lips and staggering backward he fell upon a lounge.

When he could speak he said:

"I took Dixey's diamonds, so send me to prison on that plea."

"I will see that it is done," said the chief, and all present pledged themselves to keep the secret, which, if known, must cause innocent parties to feel its shame.

CONCLUSION.

AFTER having told the young wife to return home, Dick Doom had changed his mind and begged her to remain in the city, and it was she who, in disguise, recognized her husband in A. Antonio.

She also recognized with him a Mexican who had been his confederate in crime in New Mexico.

Andrea Aquero was tracked to a fashionable up-town hotel where, shaved and stylishly dressed, he registered under his brother's name of Antonio Aquero.

His pal was arrested and frightened into confessing how the evil brother had killed Antonio, as he supposed, and yet he added:

"I do not believe the blow was fatal, for not two hours ago I am confident I saw Antonio Aquero go into the Hotel Viano, having just alighted from a cab."

"He looked ill and feeble, but I cannot be mistaken, and I was going to tell Senor Andrea when you arrested me."

Upon this testimony Dick Doom went to the Hotel Viano and found Antonio Aquero, when

the whole story came out, and the bringing of the real thief to bay quickly followed.

The prisoner, enveloped in a coarse ulster and wearing a slouch hat, was removed at once to prison, where he found his comrade in crime, while Dick Doom escorted the young wife out to her home, where it was found that her brother Harold had just arrived, bringing information that showed Antonio Aquero to have had a brother, Andrea, a villain then under life sentence for crimes committed in Peru.

He had escaped from prison by killing a guard, and had taken with him a fellow-prisoner, who, from the description and name, Dick Doom was sure was the man who claimed to be a New Mexican.

The two had been thought to have been killed in Mexico, but convinced that they were not, requisition papers had been sent by a special officer to take them back to Peru, and he had accompanied Harold Hartwell on to New York.

"If that pretended Mexican is the Peruvian friend of Andrea Aquero, then back to Peru they go, and there will be no trial here, which will be best for all," said Dick Doom.

The next day Dick Doom was accompanied to the city by Harold Hartwell, and when they met the Peruvian officer and he saw the two prisoners he said at once they were the ones he was after.

The result was that the Peruvian officer sailed in the first steamer for South America with his two prisoners, and no trial being held in New York, the story of Dick Doom's Diamond Deal never leaked out.

Antonio Aquero recovered his strength rapidly under the care of the lovely girl whom he so dearly loved, and a few months after they were married, and Myrtle received as her bridal gift the Aquero jewels, not to speak of other presents, one from Henry Dixey being especially appreciated.

Some months after the departure of the Peruvian officer and his prisoners, word came to Dick Doom of their execution there, and with the official announcement he went out to Jersey and broke the news to Helen Hartwell, whose secret no one knew.

"It is better so," she said, sadly.

"From to-day I can forget my sad past, as I hope you will, my good friend, that you ever knew me as Billy the Bell-Boy."

"It is already forgotten," was the reply, and Dick Doom returned to New York, for he had an engagement that night to have supper with Henry Dixey.

The two met just at midnight in the actor's rooms, and the sun was rising when they parted, Henry Dixey saying:

"Remember, Dick Doom, we are friends for life."

THE END.

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